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Interview

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‘You can’t have two leaders riding the same horse’

Boris Gelfand
to challenge Vishy Anand

Garry Kasparov
Letter from the Soviet Chess School

and much more

Bobby Fischer

As seen by star photographer Harry Benson

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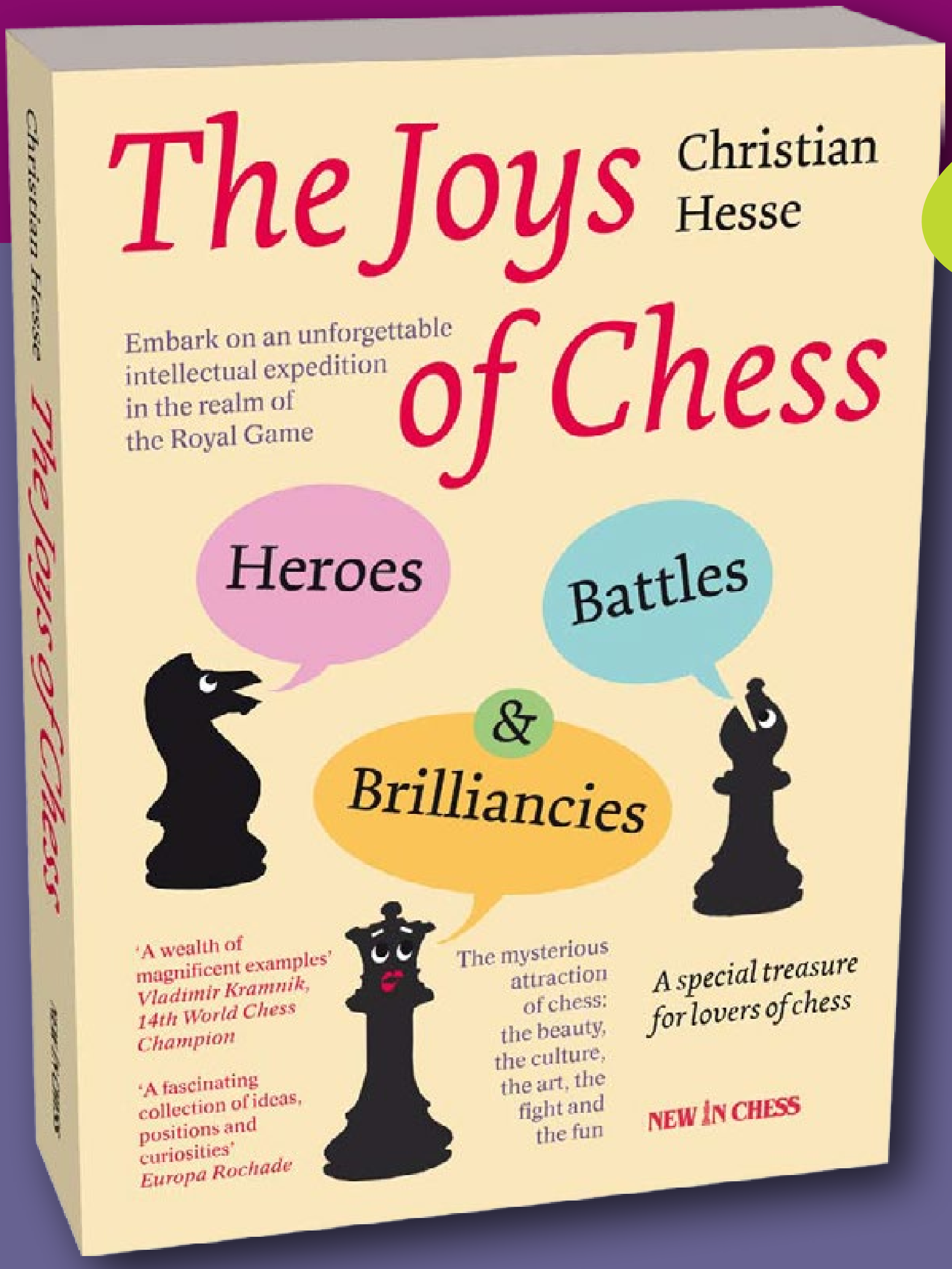
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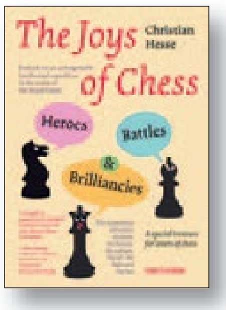

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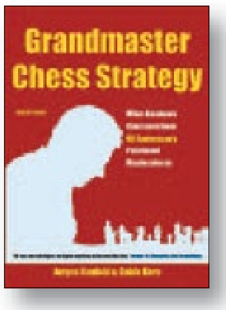

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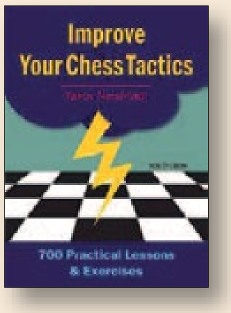

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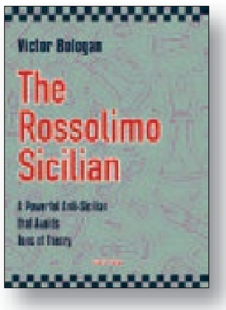

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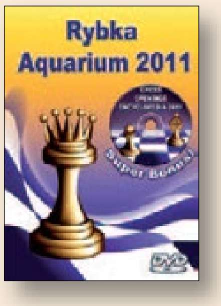

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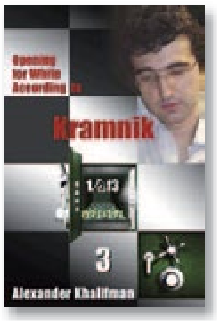

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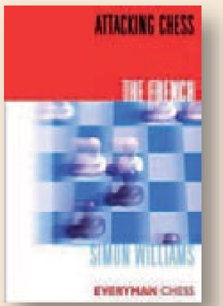

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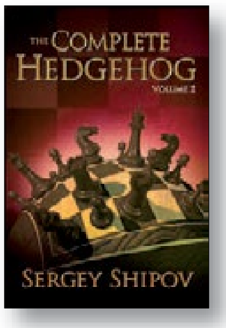

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2011 Issue 4

NEW IN CHESS

PUBLISHER: Allard Hoogland EDITORS-IN-CHIEF: Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam, Jan Timman

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Out of thirty classical games only three ended in a decision at the Candidates' matches in Kazan and in an avalanche of tie-breaks and upsets the favourites were knocked out one after the other. In the six-game final between two dark horses, 42-year-old Boris Gelfand of Israel and 27-year-old Alexander Grischuk of Russia, the oldest participant prevailed and won the right to challenge Vishy Anand for the World Championship.

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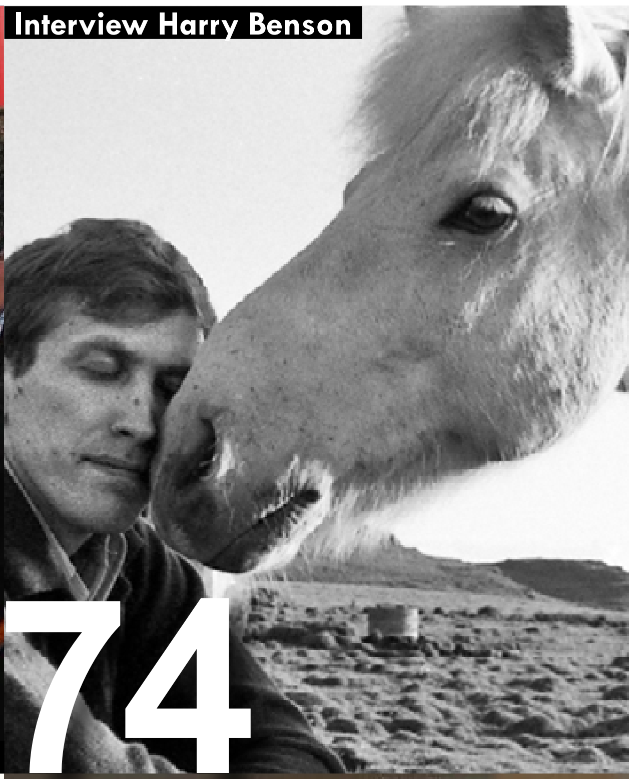

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Interview Gata Kamsky

> 'Then we would go again and the horses had disappeared. And as we walked away Bobby would turn around and look. You knew he was looking, but he didn't want to say.'

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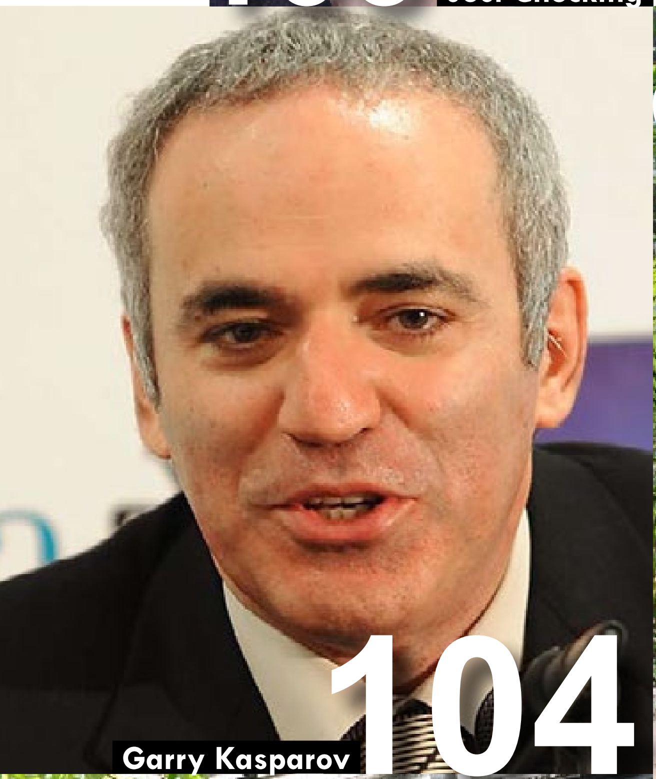

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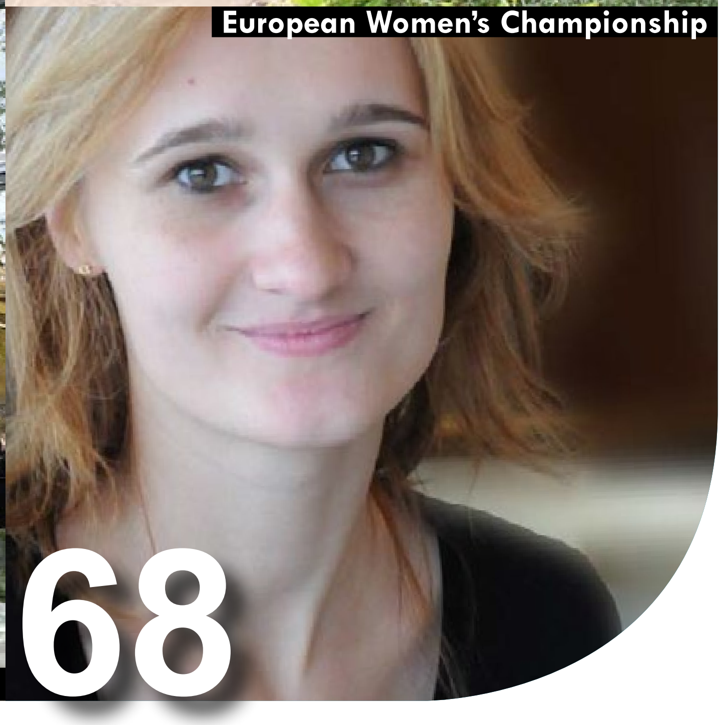

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Vladimir Barsky, Victoria Cmilyte, Anish Giri, Mark Glukhovsky, Jan Gustafsson, Charles Hertan, Robert Hess, Max Illingworth, Gata Kamsky, Garry Kasparov, Luke McShane, Macauley Peterson, Yasser Seirawan, Sam Shankland, Nigel Short, Yury Shulman, Jan Timman, Anna Zatonskih
PHOTOS AND ILLUSTRATIONS
Vladimir Barsky, Harry Benson, Cathy Rogers
COVER PHOTO
Bobby Fischer: Harry Benson

NIC's Café

What's Next?

As expected, the high number of draws in the Candidates' matches in Kazan and the prominent role of the tiebreaks led to heated discussions everywhere. Fierce criticism of the format was expressed by the president of the European Chess Union, Silvio Danailov, who condemned the decisive role of rapid and blitz games in the classical world championship, called the PR results of Kazan 'very poor' and urged the organizing committee responsible for this failure to resign. In a direct reply, in which he made no attempt to be diplomatic, FIDE Vice-President Georgios Makropoulos accused Danailov of 'once more showing no respect for the top players', of mixing up his role of ECU president and manager of Topalov, and of expressing his criticism as part of his campaign to run for FIDE president in 2014.

In the meantime, WCOC member Emil Sutovsky has sent a poll to the leading players on their preferred format. It will be interesting to see what they think. One of the first to react was Vladimir Kramnik, who states that he prefers a round-robin, which is more interesting for the spectators as 'you have to play more aggressively'. And the chess is limited to classical chess. That all sounds reasonable, but there may be people who think he's changed his mind since the round-robin world championship in Mexico in 2007.

NEW IN CHESS

ECU President Silvio Danailov urges the WCOC to resign.

NEW IN CHESS

FIDE Vice-President Georgios Makropoulos urges Danailov to stop campaigning for the 2014 elections.

Where to Start?

Last time, in an item called 'Lacking all logic' we expressed our unhappiness with the 15-minute delay of moves at chess events, which over the past years has been enthusiastically promoted on the German website ChessBase as an effective measure to avoid cheating. As we believe that the problem of cheating in chess should neither be underestimated nor exaggerated, we were happy to see that the promoter of the idea, Frederic Friedel, reacted to our objections on his website, and we hoped that his reaction would contribute to a fruitful discussion on the subject. Of course, the re-use of the title, 'Lacking all logic' should have warned us!

His reply starts off with an almost complete reproduction of our small article. With a slight frown we couldn't remember having given permission for that, but then quickly realized that we were in the world of copy and paste. And in fact it was a good thing that the text was all there, as it allowed the reader to see that various statements were attributed to us that we never wrote. Having presented our lines the author sighs: 'Oh dear, one hardly knows where to start.' This hesitation proves to be a serious problem, for in a reply that is four (!) times the size of our modest article the author fails to give concrete answers to our objections, or to reject them, and where he tries, his statements beg for comments. For instance, he writes extensively about the fight against cheating (doping) in athletics and cycling and claims that these concentrated efforts have improved the public image of these sports. That may be partly true, but in any attempt to promote chess we'd still avoid any associations with these sports. Both in athletics and in cycling, an endless list of great champions have been caught cheating, big names that all fans know. You don't want to compare the situation in chess to worlds that are synonymous with a permanent and possibly even hopeless fight against cheating. Mr. Friedel rightly remembers that for some time German television stopped broadcasting cycling altogether because of its criminal image. Today doping tests are stricter than ever and the racers are monitored in and out of competition, but there is a widespread cynicism that today's champions are mainly 'clean' because their doping methods have become even more sophisticated. We wouldn't like to see our champions in that category.

Of course, let there be no misunderstanding, we also believe that hiding your head in the sand would be a silly choice, now that there are ways to cheat at chess that are harder to detect than ever, but the countermeasures should not damage the image of the game and should make sense. Mr. Friedel reiterates his claim that the 15-minute delay was twice used in Dortmund and worked flawlessly. We still don't believe it did. And it's even worse, it was used four times! Perhaps it's useful to summarize what we wrote in the reports on those four tournaments. In our report on the 2007 Dortmund tournament we pointed out that the measure didn't make any sense if it was not applied together with additional measures such as frisking the players, etc. Interestingly enough, tournament director Stefan Koth wasn't too impressed either. He agreed with our criticism, although he didn't indicate that there were any plans to introduce these further measures the next year. Indeed, they were not introduced in 2008, when they had the delay again. When we told the tournament director that to us the delay still didn't make any sense, he agreed again, but told us that by this delay they wanted to offer the spectators who came to the theatre to watch the games live something extra: they would see the moves 15 minutes before the Internet audience. An interesting argument, considering that the promoters of the delay claim that these 15 minutes don't make any difference for the people at home! Mr. Koth's reaction one year later was even more telling. This time he told us that actually they had not given the matter any thought. They had simply copied the tournament from last year and this happened to be part of it. To which he added that they might abolish the measure the next year! But they didn't. With admirable persistence we once again asked him why they stuck with this measure, which as a stand-alone measure had no effect at all, and this time his answer was once again that they wanted to offer the spectators that took the trouble to come to the Schauspielhaus 'something extra'.

Summarizing the reasons why he thinks we are against the 15-minute delay, Mr. Friedel writes: 'Most importantly, it is highly inconvenient to the chess journalist who would be forced to walk all the way from the press room to the playing hall – often dozens of yards – if they want to find out the result of a game.' We assume that was a friendly joke. But it is true, we couldn't help mentioning that aspect, as annoying the journalists was the only effect the measure had in Dortmund.

Let's not forget that there is no one set of measures to fight cheating at chess events. Much depends on the type of tournament, the hall or room where the games are played. The bigger the number of participants and the size of the hall, the harder it will be to have water-tight anti-cheating measures. However, it's not easy to think of an event where the 15-minute delay of moves would be an essential part of the solution.

Strategic Masterpiece

Only a couple of weeks after the U.S. Championship the Saint Louis Chess Club staged two matches, the main attraction being the one between local hero Hikaru Nakamura and Ukraine's Ruslan Ponomariov. They played six classical and four rapid games. Nakamura defeated Ponomariov 6½-3½ (3½-2½) but was highly critical of his play in the 'real test', the classical part. 'I played four and a half bad games and one good one', Nakamura commented. That one game was the last one, which indeed was a strategic masterpiece. As a perceptive viewer pointed out, Nakamura won that game in the same outfit (jacket, red shirt, yellow tie) as he had worn when he beat Ponomariov in the blitz play-off in San Sebastian two years ago.

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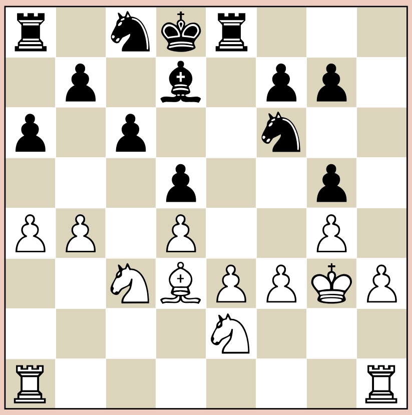
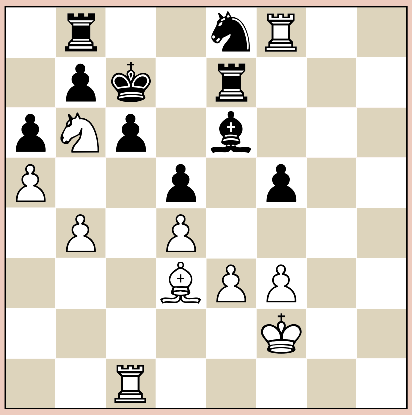
Hikaru Nakamura: 'four and a half bad games and one good one.'

QO 11.3 – D31
Hikaru Nakamura
Ruslan Ponomariov
St. Louis 2011, 6th match game

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗e7 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♗f4 c6 6.♕c2 ♗d6 7.♗xd6 ♕xd6 8.e3 ♕g6 9.♕xg6 Nakamura wants to show that there are other ways to play for a win than keeping the queens on. **9...hxg6 10.b4 a6** Perhaps the losing move (Nakamura). **11.f3 ♘d7 12.♗d3 ♘e7 13.♘ge2 g5 14.♔f2 ♘f6 15.g4 ♔d8 16.♔g3 ♗d7 17.a4 ♘c8 18.h3 ♖e8**



19.♔f2 And not 19.e4 dxe4 20.fxe4 ♘d5 21.exd5? ♖e3+. **19...♘d6 20.a5 ♖e7 21.♖ac1 ♘fe8 22.♘g3 g6 23.h4 gxh4 24.♖xh4 f5 25.gxf5** Even better was 25.g5. **25...♘xf5 26.♘xf5 gxf5 27.♖h8 ♖b8 28.♘a4 ♔c7 29.♘b6 ♗e6 30.♖f8**



30...♖f7 The pawn cannot be defended by 30...♘d6 because of 31.♘a8+. **31.♖xf7+ ♗xf7 32.♗xf5 ♘d6 33.♗d3 ♖h8 34.♖g1 ♔d8 35.♘a4 ♘c4 36.♘c5** If only that pawn was not on a6. **36...♖h2+ 37.♖g2 ♖xg2+ 38.♔xg2 ♔c7 39.♗xc4 dxc4 40.♘a4 ♗e8 41.♘c3 b6 42.e4 ♔b7 43.♔f2 c5 44.bxc5** Black resigned.■

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Short Fairy Tales

Dear GM Nigel Short,

I came across your article ‘French Fraud’ in New In Chess 2011/2. While I tend to agree with you on several points (praising the French federation for their brave action to publicize the issue, which FIDE will definitely follow until a final court verdict, and criticizing the number of host federation teams in Olympiads, which is now being abolished by FIDE), your story about the 2012 World Championship bid from Chess Promotions Ltd where my name is mentioned, would better be called ‘Short Fairy Tales’ rather than ‘Short Stories’.

You are writing there a completely false story and it could be either because you simply do not bother to read documents in full or you do know the facts but you prefer to ignore them and to publish lies. Had you looked at the World Championship Match Regulations you would have realized that the €100,000 you mention is part of the regulations, and not at all a new demand. Just for your knowledge, the money for the World Championship and Olympiads Committee mentioned in the regulations is meant to cover all expenses made for the World Championship Cycle and for Olympiads – meetings with government officials, sponsors or organizers, travelling costs, inspections, etc.

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Your comment about ‘greedy gentlemen of FIDE’ giving the impression that this money is going to our pockets is not only a lie, but a dirty one. In the same token, and perhaps even more ugly, is your general comment, insulting all Presidential Board members: ‘the more dubious and disreputable one’s background, the more warmly one is likely to be welcomed into the bosom of ever-expanding Presidential Board’, which can easily be considered as libel in any legal system.

Talking about the 2012 London bid of Chess Promotions Ltd, I will just say that the reason you mentioned for withdrawing the bid was not and could not be the reason for it, as, further to what has been mentioned above, FIDE gave up this amount although it was entitled to get it. The reason for withdrawing was fully explained in my open letter mentioned by you.

Israel Gelfer
FIDE Vice-President

Postscript Nigel Short

Dear FIDE Vice-President, Israel Gelfer,

Contrary to your voluble assertions, the reason for the withdrawal of the London 2012 bid is exactly as I stated it – unless, of course, you know better than the man who actually made the decision to pull the plug, the chief organiser of Chess Promotions Ltd., Mr. Malcolm Pein. The proof can readily be found in an interview on ‘The Full English Breakfast’ (http://thefeb.com/) podcast 008. Mr. Pein’s salient points are that there was a substantial bid of 2 million euros, from London, on the table – of which FIDE was entitled to 20%, or 400,000 euros. He adds that the cost of providing the venue, hotels etc. was a further 1 million euros, plus.

FIDE, with a significantly bigger purse (and therefore revenue) than most recent World Championships ought to have been satisfied with its 400,000 euro sanctioning fee – 20% being high by the standards of most other sports. It wasn’t. It wanted an extra 100,000 euros for the (FIDE) World Championship Organising Committee, which, as you informed us, is for expenses incurred for a large variety of events – most of which have absolutely nothing to do with the World Championship Final. Costs for site-inspections etc. for the Final, as you know, would come to but a small fraction of that amount.

You are quite right on one point – according to the gravy-train regulations, FIDE is entitled to this sum, but that is essentially the problem: the sponsors want a chess match but the parasitical bureaucrats want to feast their fill. You claim, without evidence, ‘FIDE gave up this amount’, but it would be of great interest to hear when you believe this event to have occurred? As late as the 30th November FIDE was still demanding the additional 100,000 euros in writing. Furthermore your statement is flatly contradicted by Malcolm Pein in the interview viz. ‘We said it was x, they said it was x +100,000’ and ‘they were insistent on getting another 100,000 euros’. If that weren’t enough, to dispel any possible lingering ambiguity Mr. Pein states ‘If 400,000 euros had been enough for FIDE, we would be having the match in London. Full-stop.’ Your intransigence on this matter is why FIDE allowed the January 29th deadline to pass. It was indeed greed that led to the collapse of the London 2012 bid, to the detriment of the players, the English chess-loving public and ultimately to FIDE itself.

Nigel Short
English Chess Federation Delegate

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B. Gelfand 2733
S. Mamedyarov 2772
ЧЕМПИОНАТ МИРА ПО ШАХМАТАМ МАТЧИ ПРЕТЕНДЕНТОВ 2011

All's still quiet. Levon Aronian strolls around the stage while Boris Gelfand is ready for his first game against Shakhriyar Mamedyarov.

With highly charged confrontations of only four games it was hard to predict what the long-awaited Candidates' Matches would bring. Would the top-seeds control their nerves and live up to expectations or would they succumb to the pressure? Once again reality beat our wildest imagination. Out of thirty classical games only three ended in a decision and in an avalanche of tiebreaks and upsets the favourites were knocked out one after the other. In the six-game final between two dark horses, 42-year-old Boris Gelfand of Israel and 27-year-old Alexander Grischuk of Russia, the oldest participant prevailed and won the right to challenge Vishy Anand for the World Championship. A deserved win by an exemplary grandmaster, who first became a Candidate in 1991. **Vladimir Barsky** reports from Kazan.

Anand’s Dream Come True

VLADIMIR BARSKY

The latest Candidates’ cycle turned out to be so long and convoluted that after a certain point I only followed it half-heartedly. My rare flashes of interest were provoked by the various scandals. Carlsen refused to participate, saying it was improper to change the rules while the event was taking place. Improper or not; FIDE was upset, scolded Magnus, and summoned Grischuk as his replacement. Only Azerbaijan offered to host the Candidates’ final, getting an additional vacancy for this. But Aronian refused to go to Baku and the situation came to an impasse. Russia took on the role of peacemaker, offering to hold the matches in Kazan, and without claiming the organizers’ wildcard. That alternative suited everyone.

Kazan is a big city on the Volga, the capital of Tatarstan – a republic with developed industry and rich natural resources. Sport is developing actively here: European fans probably know the football team Rubin, the ice hockey team AK Bars, the basketball team UNIKS and the volleyball team Zenit. There also used to be the Ladya chess club that won the European Club Cup, but it has ceased to exist. In 2013 Kazan will host the Universiad, in which chess will be one of the sports. The Candidates’ matches were included in the plan of preparation for the Universiad, and the good relations between Kirsan Ilyumzhinov and Mintimer Shaimiev played an important role in that: the former president of Tatarstan (who received the title of chief advisor to the FIDE president) still enjoys enormous authority in the republic.

Eight grandmasters participated in the matches. Four-game matches were played in the quarter-finals and semi-finals (a six-game match in the final) with a time control of 40 moves in two hours, 20 moves in one hour and another 15 minutes to the end with a 30-second increment from the 61st move. If the scores were equal there would be tiebreaks: four games with a time control of 25+10, then if necessary two blitz games (5+3). On another tie a new mini-match would be played consisting of two blitz games (in total no more than 10 blitz games). In the most extreme case an ‘Armageddon’ was envisaged, in which White had to win. The prize fund was 420,000 euros. Quarter-final losers received 30,000 each, semi-final losers 60,000, and the finalists split 180,000 equally.

The participants lived and played in the hotel Korston fairly close to the historic city centre. All radio waves were cut off in the playing hall, and an unauthorized exit from the playing zone (comprising the stage, the rest room and the toilet) was equivalent to a loss. The stage was separated from the hall by a protective screen – a huge piece of tinted glass: the audience could see the grandmasters, but in the opposite direction only their own reflections were visible. Big screens were set up on both sides of the stage: the games were broadcast on one of them, and video footage on the other. You could take headphones and listen to commentary by grandmasters Alexander Khalifman and Sergey Rublevsky and journalist Mark Glukhovsky. The video broadcast was also shown live on the Internet.

I don't even want to remember how the quarter-final pairings were made, so I suggest taking them for granted and heading for Kazan.

Kramnik-Radjabov

Vladimir Kramnik *(Russia, Elo 2785), qualified by rating.*
Teimour Radjabov *(Azerbaijan, Elo 2744), second in the Grand Prix.*

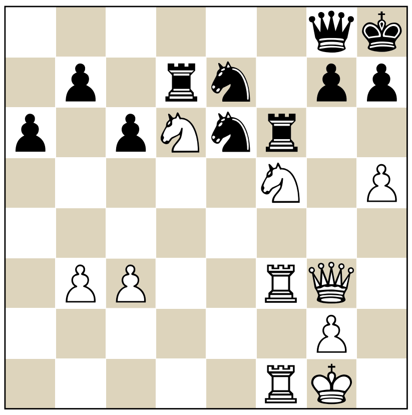
The first acquaintance I met in the Korston was Sergey Karjakin. While I was wondering what he was doing there, Zahar Efimenko joined him. It emerged that these young men were assisting Vladimir Kramnik. This union came as a complete surprise to many people.

Radjabov came to Kazan with his father, explaining the absence of seconds like this: 'I don't want anyone to bother me.' Those who helped Teimour from a distance remained out of the picture; later he only named one of them – the Frenchman Nataf.

Kramnik decided to hold the defence as Black in a classical Queen's Gambit. He demonstrated the depth of his preparation very well in the third game, in which Radjabov offered a draw on the 33rd move. Kramnik admitted that he had the final position set up at home, and his analysis was still continuing.

Of course, such far-sightedness makes an impression, but I personally didn't notice any new frontiers in Kramnik's work. But Radjabov appeared in a new light: the fervent devotee of the King's Indian also decided to hold the defence in the classical Queen's Gambit! As a result, out of eight games (four with the classical time control and four rapid games) this opening was encountered in seven, and there was one Catalan. As they joked in Kazan, if the grandmasters had got up from the table and then come back, they could have been confused about who was sitting where. Kramnik had the playing initiative, but no serious scoring possibilities were created. The affair went to blitz.

Here the grandmasters finally avoided a tedious discussion in the Queen's Gambit. Radjabov led the way by playing 1.e4!

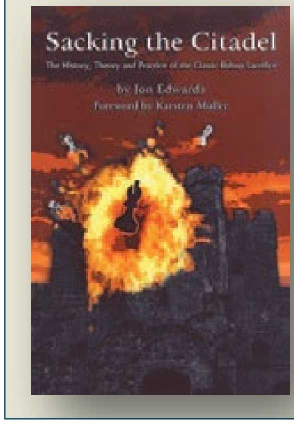


Radjabov-Kramnik (blitz-1)
position after 37...♘e7

Teimour had eight seconds left on his clock when he found an impressive combination: **38.♘h6! gxh6 39.♕e5! ♘d5 40.♖xf6 ♘xf6 41.♕xf6+ ♖g7 42.♘f5 ♕f8 43.♘xg7 ♕c5+ 44.♔h1 ♘xg7 45.♕f8+** Black resigned.

To win on command, Kramnik left the question of whether White has a slight advantage in the Queen's Gambit to the theoreticians, and initiated a long battle – 1.♘f3, 2.c4, 3.b3 ... On the screen there was a large image of Vladimir, and it was clearly noticeable that something mischievous and boyish had penetrated through the guise of the well-groomed gentleman: a couple of the buttons on his shirt collar were undone, his eyes squinted slyly, his hands flew over the board. That's how I remember Volodya from even before the Kremlin Stars: a nuts-and-bolts player, adroit, nimble, and also a dandy!

Kramnik put the pressure on, got through to the centre, and scaled the seventh rank. Defending, Radjabov let go of a pawn and activated his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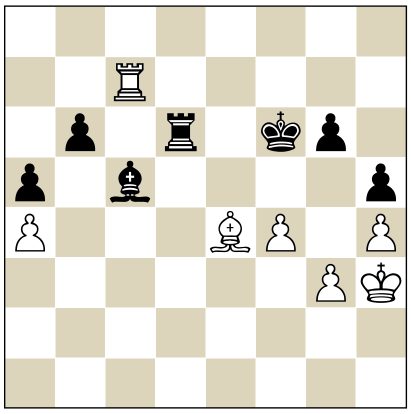
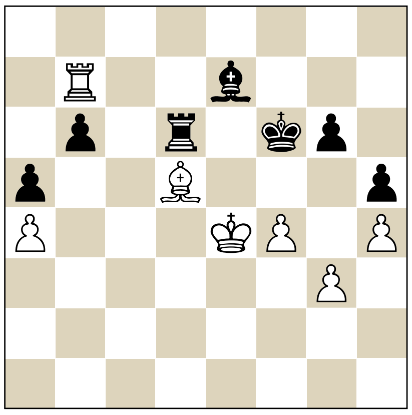
A friendly chat at the opening ceremony between Levon Aronian, the top favourite, and Boris Gelfand, who few believed had any chance. How different things turned out.

pieces. Then White lost the thread of the game and almost everything with it – the pawn and the configuration of his pieces. True, he had about 10 more seconds – 25 versus 15, but with the addition of three seconds per move that wasn't much of a handicap. And suddenly, unable to withstand the blows from his two energetic hands, the electronic clock broke.



Kramnik-Radjabov (blitz-2)
position after 60...♔f6

Kramnik: 'I didn't know what to do in this situation, and I asked the arbiter to act in accordance with the rules. What to do isn't stated clearly anywhere, this situation hasn't been investigated for blitz. The position was objectively drawn, and I thought (although it turned out that this wasn't the case) that the circumstances were against me. Because while they were resetting the clock a person could think about what he should do next. This was nobody's fault, it's just a situation that arose.'
Radjabov: 'I had that kind of clock: if you hit it hard, it sometimes broke.'
The pause lasted for about five or ten minutes. Then a new clock appeared on the table and Kramnik came up to the stage with a spring in his step. Radjabov looked very tense and stiff. I couldn't believe my eyes, but just a few moves later a zugzwang appeared on the board, and Black had become hopeless!
61.♗c2 ♖d4 62.♗b3 ♗e7 63.♗c4 ♖d6
The king on f6 is falling into a mating net, from which it has to extricate itself immediately: 63...♔f5! 64.♔g2 ♗c5 65.♖f7+ ♔e4, and a draw isn't far off.
64.♔g2 ♖d2+ 65.♔f3 ♖d6 66.♔e4 ♖d8 67.♗d5 ♖d6?
67...♖b8 held the defence. White could have played more strongly on the previous move – 67.♖b7! But how to investigate those kinds of subtleties in seconds?
68.♖b7!



Now Black can't move a single piece!
68...♖d8 69.♖xb6+ ♖d6 70.♖b5 ♗d8 71.♖b7 ♗e7 72.♖a7 ♖b6 73.♖xa5 ♖b4+ 74.♔f3 ♖d4 75.♖a6+ ♔g7 76.♗e4 ♖d6 77.♖xd6 ♗xd6 78.a5 ♗c5 79.a6 ♔f6 80.♔e2
Black resigned.

Thus Kramnik returned to the battle. In the third game he celebrated a victory as White (although, not having achieved anything as White in the King's Indian, he offered a draw), and he held on in the fourth and made it to the semi-final.

Aronian-Grischuk

***Levon Aronian** (Armenia, Elo 2808), Grand Prix winner.*
***Alexander Grischuk** (Russia, Elo 2747), third in the Grand Prix.*

Levon Aronian was considered the favourite for the whole Candidates' cycle, and he had a very favourable score against Grischuk in their individual encounters. But Alexander was geared up for a big fight and had attracted such powerful consultants as Peter Svidler, Etienne Bacrot and Alexander Riazantsev. Aronian was assisted by Gabriel Sargissian and Sergei Movsesian, and Viktor Laznicka also came to Kazan – apparently to support Levon too. In the first game Aronian was already very close to victory: Grischuk messed something up in the Grünfeld Defence and got a very difficult position. But in time trouble Alexander defended incredibly calmly and shrewdly (he would demonstrate those qualities again more than once in Kazan).

At around the 61st move I was talking to Svidler in the press centre, and he didn't hide his joy: 'We haven't had

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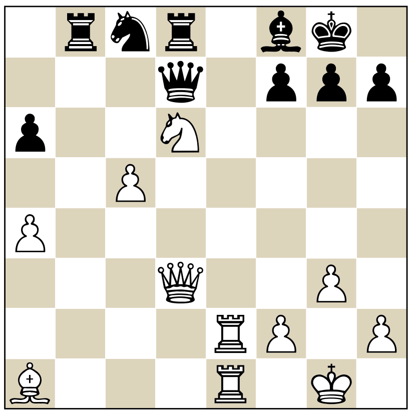
such a good position for 35 moves! Of course, in reality the game should have ended a long time ago. The fact that the game is still going on is just a bonus!'

At that point the song *The Show Must Go On!* played in the room. Indeed, Grischuk had saved half a point.

As White Grischuk couldn't create serious problems for his opponent, and as Black he saved himself again, with great difficulty. In the tiebreak Aronian avoided 1.d4 for some reason and switched to the English Opening. Apparently Levon wasn't feeling too good that day, and he also had hiccups in the game.

Grischuk: 'In the first game I managed to get a good, fighting position, after which Levon played very unsuccessfully. In the second he used his brilliant preparation, and I immediately got a very difficult position. Although the latest miracle almost happened, it wasn't quite enough. In the third game I got a very difficult position again, and at one point Levon could have won very beautifully.'



Aronian-Grischuk (rapid-3)
position after 30...♘c8

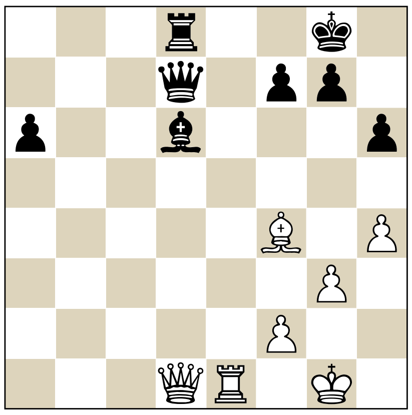
31.♗e5?

31.♕c3!, getting a grip on the g7-square, led to victory: 31...♘xd6 32.c6 ♕c7 33.♖e7!.

31...♘xd6 32.cxd6 ♕xa4 33.♗f4 h6 34.h4 ♕b5 35.♕d1 ♖b7 36.♖c2 ♖bd7 37.♖c7?

37.♖d2 preserved a symbolic advantage. Aronian sets a trap with the flags about to fall, but he overlooks one tactical nuance.

37...♗xd6 38.♖xd7 ♕xd7



39.♕xd6

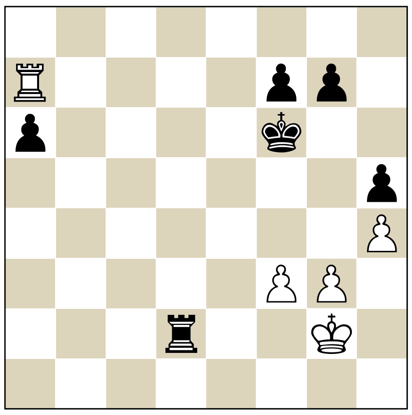
White was counting on 39.♗xd6 ♕xd6? 40.♖e8+!, but the zwischenzug 39...♕c6! exists – Black wins the bishop back and gets winning chances. So White has to exchange queens.

39...♕xd6 40.♗xd6 ♖xd6 41.♖e8+ ♔h7

The screen showed that Grischuk started smiling at this point. Obviously he was amused by the striking coincidence of this position with the third 'normal time' game, only with the colours and the players' roles reversed.

42.♖e7 ♔g6 43.♖a7 h5 44.♔g2 ♔f6 45.f3 ♖d2+

Aronian kept his rook to the side of the passed pawn, but Grischuk put his in front of the pawn. However, Aronian dexterously exchanged off almost all the pawns on the kingside and got a draw.



46.♔h3 ♖a2 47.g4 hxg4+ 48.♔xg4 g6 49.f4 ♖a5 50.♖a8 ♔e6 51.♖a7 ♔f6 52.♖a8 ♖a1 53.♖a7 a5 54.♖a6+ ♔g7 55.h5 f5+ 56.♔h4 ♖h1+ 57.♔g3 ♖g1+ 58.♔h2 ♖g4 59.hxg6 ♖xf4 60.♖xa5 ♔xg6 61.♔g2 ♔f7

Draw.

VLADIMIR BARSKY

Veselin Topalov: 'If I can't win a position like that, then of course I shouldn't get through to the next stage.'

The fourth game was very tense. Aronian messed up in the opening, after which Grischuk could have obtained a big advantage. But he was too slow, and the situation became extremely complicated. Nevertheless, White maintained some slight pressure, and in order to neutralize it Aronian gave up his queen for a rook and a knight. A draw seemed almost inevitable, but instead of staying where he was, Black embarked on an unsuccessful regrouping of his pieces and came under attack. At the concluding press conference Levon Aronian congratulated his opponent on his win, admitted that Grischuk had defended just brilliantly, and even tried to joke. Only his sad, unusually motionless eyes showed how disappointed the No.1 favourite was with his performance.

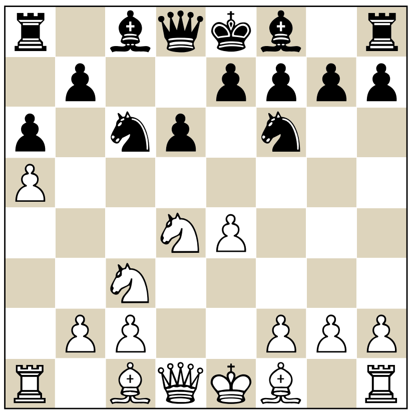
Topalov-Kamsky

Veselin Topalov *(Bulgaria, Elo 2775), participant in the previous World Championship match.*
Gata Kamsky *(USA, Elo 2732), participant in the final Candidates' match in 2009.*

Topalov was assisted by Ivan Cheparinov and Erwin l'Ami, and Kamsky by Emil Sutovsky and Andrey Volokitin.

In 2007 Kamsky won the World Cup and received the right to a duel with the world champion, but FIDE forced a Candidates' match with Topalov on him. In 2009 the Bulgarian grandmaster won in Sofia. So here was a new encounter between the rivals, and now on Kamsky's home turf: Gata is an ethnic Tatar and one of his relatives is a famous Tatar playwright. It was no coincidence that he had a large number of fans in Kazan. The duel turned out to be unusually interesting, including from the theoretical point of view. The players literally competed to be the first to come up with a surprise. The first game, with Kamsky as White, saw:

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.a4 ♘c6 7.a5!?

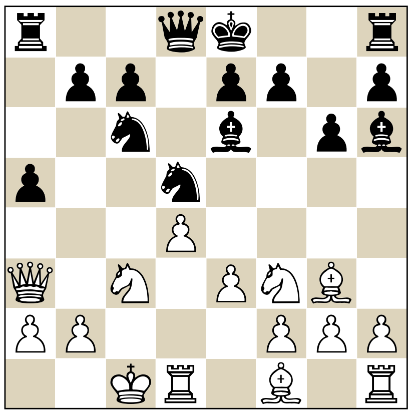


In a position the length and breadth of which has been traversed, White suddenly sacrifices a pawn. For what? Topalov declined the gift, accepting a slightly worse position, and later with the help of his trademark method – the exchange sacrifice – he equalized his chances.

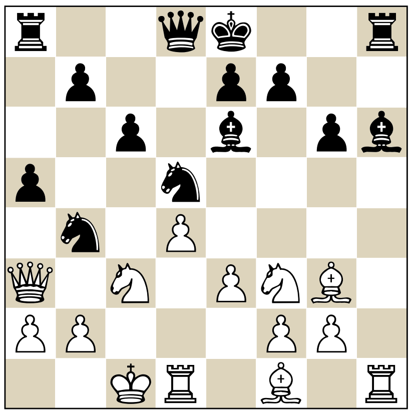
In the second game it was Veselin who surprised his opponent by using a new plan in the Anti-Grünfeld. But then he played only unsuccessfully.

EO 52.9 – A15
Veselin Topalov
Gata Kamsky
Kazan 2011 (2)

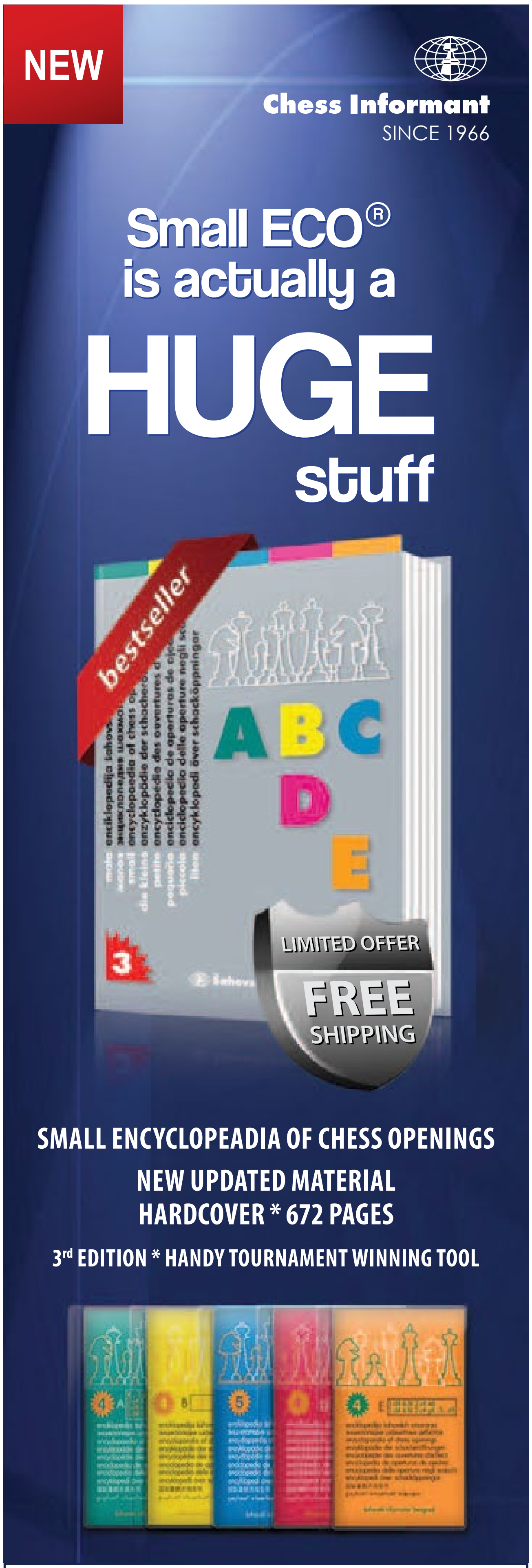
1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4. cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♕b3!? ♘b6 6.d4 ♗g7 7.♗f4 ♗e6 8.♕a3 ♘c6 9.0-0-0 ♘d5 10.♗g3 ♗h6+ 11.e3 a5



12.h4 ♘cb4 13.h5 c6 14.hxg6 hxg6



15.♖d2
Sergey Rublevsky: 'Topalov wasn't in the mood at all today. After the opening I didn't like Kamsky's position, 12. ♗b5!? deserved attention, and after 12.h4 ♘cb4 the move 13.♘g5 was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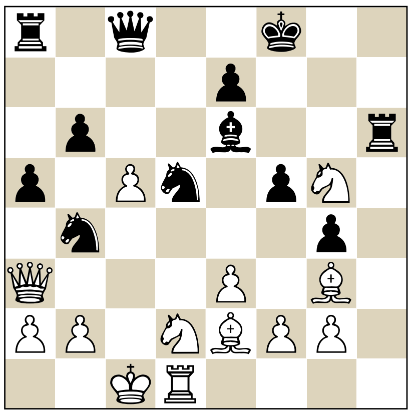
interesting. Instead of that, Topalov opened the h-file, and Black started creating threats on the open file. Why exchange on g6, to then play 15.♖d2, defending against ...♗xe3+? All this looks extremely strange.'
15...f6 16.♘e4 b6 17.♗e2 ♕c8 18.♖h4 ♔f7 19.♖d1 g5 20.♖h2 g4 21.♘fd2 c5 22.dxc5 f5 23.♖xh6 Topalov was unsure of himself: having fallen into a difficult position, he tried to wriggle out of it with the help of an exchange sacrifice.
23...♖xh6 24.♘g5+ ♔f8



25.♘xe6+ Another incomprehensible decision, as now Black brings all his pieces into the attack. 25.♔b1 was necessary. **25...♕xe6 26.♗c4 ♖c8 27.♗f4 ♖f6 28.e4 ♖xc5 29.exd5 ♕xd5 30.b3 ♕d4 31.♗e3 ♕c3+** White resigned.

After taking the lead, Kamsky started playing less confidently. In the third game he got through a dubious position as White (even Gata himself considered it very bad, but the computer mitigates the evaluation), and in the fourth he was within a hair's breadth of defeat. But Fortune turned out to be favourably disposed towards him.

At the concluding press conference, while Gata was talking about the game, Veselin sat hunched over and shook his head from time to time. When the press attaché addressed a question to him, Topalov winced and didn't wake up from his stupor immediately: 'My position was winning, and there was so much time left!... But if I can't win a position like that, then of course I shouldn't get through to the next stage.'

Mamedyarov-Gelfand

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov *(Azerbaijan, Elo 2772), Azerbaijan's nominee.*
Boris Gelfand *(Israel, Elo 2733), winner of the 2009 World Cup.*

Mamedyarov came with his father and seconds Rauf Mamedov and Elizbar Ubilava. Gelfand was assisted by Alexander Khuzman and Maxim Rodshtein.

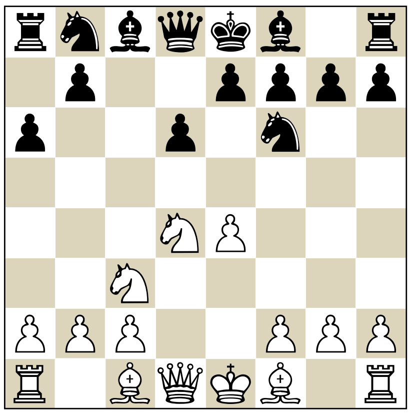
Gelfand: 'Mamedyarov surprised me by completely changing his opening repertoire: he started going 1.e4 and playing very sharp Sicilians, and for Black he prepared the Meran. Both of these openings require an enormous amount of work. The first three games were very dramatic battles. In the first Shakhriyar had the advantage, in the second I did, and in the third there was very sharp play in which luck turned out to be on my side, and that determined the outcome of the match. I think Mamedyarov was let down by his intense training. His wonderful practical qualities are still the foundation of his strength, and since he hasn't played for a long time, Shakhriyar sometimes started thinking at the wrong moment, and was noticeably nervous. Clearly he had done a lot of work and reached a new level, and I think that very big successes will soon come to him. His preparation will produce a result in the long term, but it didn't work in his first match.'

Mamedyarov: 'I came here with a big reserve of opening ideas, and I had a problem – what to play. Previously I didn't have much of a choice, but now it has appeared, and it's bothering me. But my biggest mistake was probably that I hadn't played chess for a long time, more than six months. That's wrong – I'm young, I have to play! My blunders were associated with that – you're playing OK, then you blunder something. I probably also played too riskily. Boris played the third game just fantastically, he created a masterpiece. He won worthily!

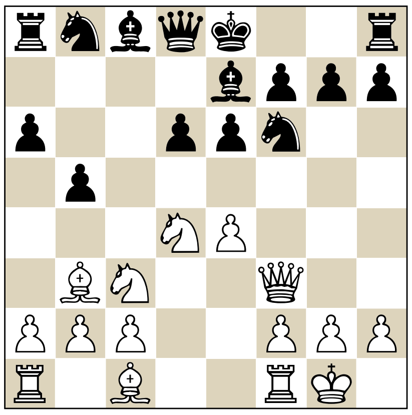
NOTES BY
Anish Giri

SI 13.15 – B87
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
Boris Gelfand
Kazan 2011, 4th match game

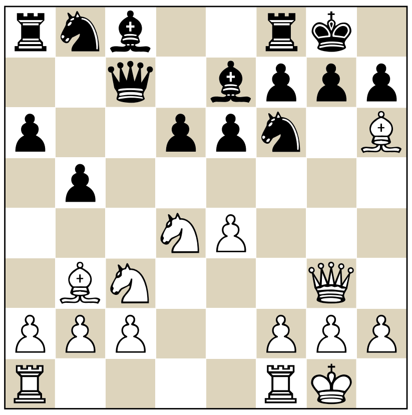
1.e4 Shakhriyar and his team decided to break down the rock-solid Petroff, but Boris showed that he can be very flexible as well. **1...c5!**
This was the second black game of Gelfand in their mini-match, and while the Sicilian in the first one was (probably) a surprise, this time there was no doubt that Mamedyarov would try something sharp and more principled.
2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6



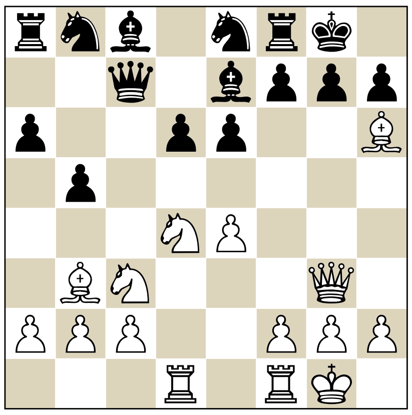
6.♗c4!?
Somehow the once very popular 6.♗c4 variation isn't getting too much attention from the very top nowadays. 6.♗g5 and 6.♗e3 are supposed to be more critical, but then again, they are probably the ones Boris was concentrating the most on in his preparations...
6...e6 7.♗b3 b5 Gelfand wouldn't be Gelfand if he wasn't always going for the very main lines.
8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♕f3
One would expect the f4-f5 plan to be more threatening than this somehow amateurish-looking approach. Yet, while the idea of f4 seems to be too slow, the somewhat bold ♕f3-g3, on the contrary, is very challenging.
Having said that, to show that 9.f4 is inferior, I would have to write a huge opening survey in which I'd have to analyse all White's moves, e5, f5, all the queen moves, all the pawn sacs... So just believe me and all the other top players who went for ♕f3.



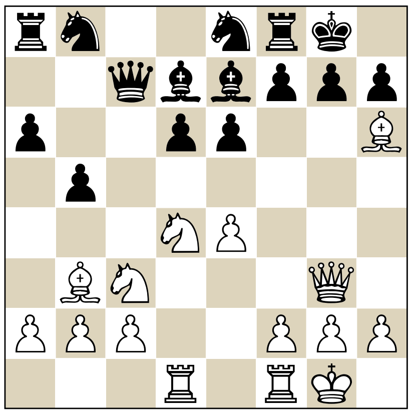
9...♕c7 Black had to do something about the threat of e5.
9...♕b6 is another huge line, with yet another artificial but in a way logical idea: to fianchetto the queen. Obviously, Black does not do this because he thinks that his queen is more powerful on the diagonal than the bishop, but just because he doesn't want to let his opponent get the brilliancy prize after 9...♗b7 10.♗xe6!.
After 9...♕b6 the play continues 10.♗e3 ♕b7, with lots of lines and games...
10.♕g3 0-0 11.♗h6



White continues with somewhat premature-looking play, but in fact it's the only way to somehow justify the aggressive position of the bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal.
11...♘e8 12.♖ad1
Preparing f4, as otherwise the piece on d4 is lost after ...♕b6, followed by ... e5.



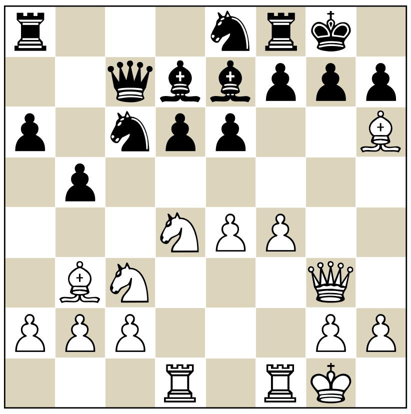
12...♗d7
I must say I have always been amused by this line. All moves make sense to me, but at the same time they all look somewhat artificial. This one prepares ...♘c6, as the immediate 12...♘c6 would be severely punished by the typical 13.♘d5! exd5 14.♘xc6!. Such tricks are the reason why the 6.♗c4 line is very popular at amateur level – where every second trick actually happens and doesn't stay behind the curtains.
12...♔h8 makes some sense to me, though, but for one reason or another, the move hasn't been played by strong players. Let me show you one trick: 13.♗e3 ♘c6 – a new move by the way... Now White maybe has some advantage, but definitely not due to 14.♘d5?, which loses to the shocking 14...♘xd4!, and there is no check on e7, but there is one on e2 and on g3.



13.f4
Finally, a typical Sicilian move is played! Yet, lots of players kept on playing under the motto the weirder the better, amongst whom Garry Kasparov himself, who managed to beat the very same Boris Gelfand with 13.

♘f3!? in 1993. Then, a year later, I was born and Gelfand improved and managed to hold it against Kasparov in 1994, when Garry tried 13.♘f3 again.

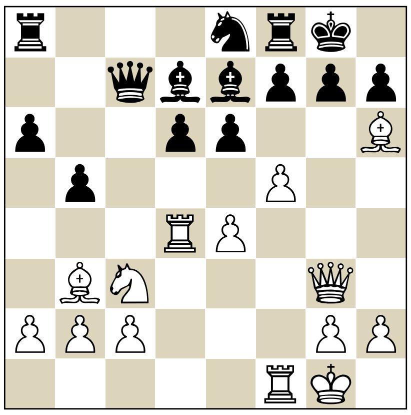
13...♘c6



14.f5!?

This is the main plan that White has whenever he puts his bishop on b3. However, a bit more popular is to first deprive the bishop of the e6-square: 14.♘xc6 ♗xc6 15.f5, with similar play as in the game: 15...♔h8! 16.f6! gxh6 (16...♗xf6 17.♖xf6!) 17.fxe7 ♕xe7 18.♕f2 ♘g7, and some games have been played from this position, amongst them a game Boris lost to Ivanchuk in 2008. Gelfand, as you have seen, has a lot of experience in this line. Black should be fine, although Black did lose quite a few games.

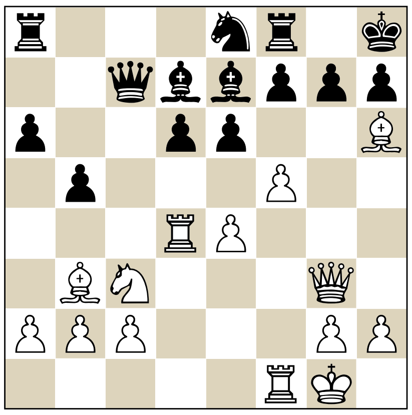
14...♘xd4 15.♖xd4



15...♔h8!

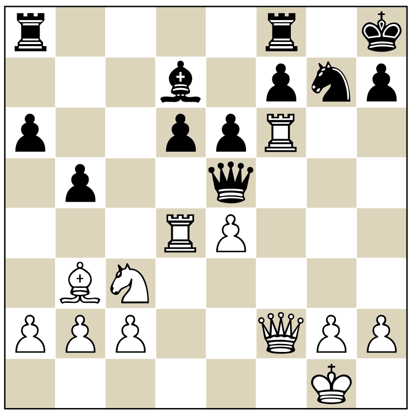
A novelty, and a surprise for Mamedyarov!

More popular is the move 15...♗f6, as seen in a lot of correspondence games. They were all inspired by Morozevich-Kasparov from Astana 2001, which Kasparov won. But this doesn't mean that Black's position is better: 16.♖d3 ♗e5 17.♕g4 b4 18.f6 g6 19.♘e2 – don't ask me who is better. I think Mamedyarov and Gelfand know.



16.♗e3?!

16.f6! was the way, and, incidentally, a typical way, to fight for the initiative. Obviously Mamedyarov didn't want to fight on his opponent's territory, but at top level, if you don't put pressure yourself, you usually end up as a victim: 16...♗xf6 (16...gxf6?! 17.♗xf8 ♗xf8 is unlikely to be enough. Black lacks a piece on e5 and neither the knight nor the bishop can end up there in the near future) 17.♖xf6! ♕c5! (I think this was what Boris had intended to play. 17...gxh6?! 18.♕f2!, and White keeps the dark-square grip and Black is going to be in trouble after a few more precise moves by White) 18.♗xg7+ (18.♘e2 e5 19.♖xd6 exd4 20.♖xd7 ♕c6!?, and Black shouldn't be any worse with an exchange for two pawns) 18...♘xg7 19.♕f2 ♕e5!?



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and this is the position Gelfand and his team had probably been aiming for. It's unbalanced on the one hand

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and balanced on the other. Here is an insane line that could follow: 20.♖h6 f5 21.♘e2 fxe4 22.♕h4 ♕f5 23.♖d1 e3 24.♘g3 ♕f2+ 25.♔h1 ♗c6. The previous sequence, although by no means forced, is instructive. White tried to mate Black, but Black kept on making those little nasty moves like ...e3! and ...♗c6!, and now White is probably forced to make a perpetual: 26.♖xh7+ ♔g8 27.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 28.♕g4+ ♔h7 29.♕h3+ ♔g7 30.♕g4+.

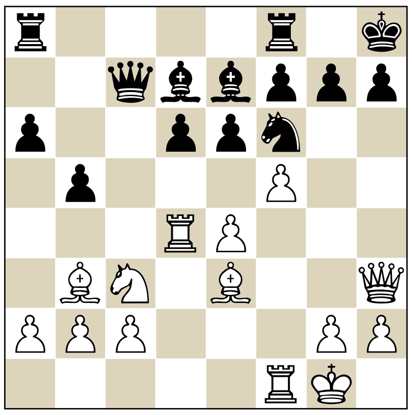
16...♘f6

Now Black has no problems whatsoever, but it's very likely that Shakhriyar had underestimated Black's next move...

17.♕h3?!

Objectively speaking, White should possibly have made a slow move like 17.a3, but then obviously Black would be fine after a logical move like ...a5, preparing ...♖b8 and ...b4, or maybe just ...♖ac8.

Having said all that, I don't think White should have allowed Black to execute his dream-break.



17...d5!

Such counter-attacking blows are a trademark of Boris's. Somehow he never misses such opportunities; he just feels when they are in the air. By the way, later in the semi-final, in a must-win situation, Gelfand got yet another Sicilian against Kamsky and played the d5-break again! I must say I also got a similar shot from Boris in the Amber tournament... So I know how it feels.

18.e5!

Shakhriyar understands that to go all-in is the only way.

18.exd5 exf5! is not how a top game should continue. Black is clearly better here, and White's pieces no longer make any sense.

АТЧИ
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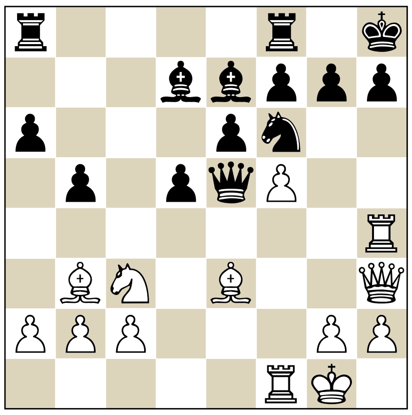
ДЕ 201

VLADIMIR BARSKY

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov: 'My biggest mistake was probably that I hadn't played chess for a long time, more than six months. That's wrong – I'm young, I have to play!'

18...♕xe5 19.♖h4



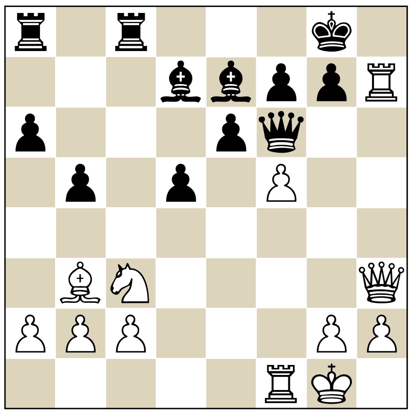
19...♖fc8!?

A strong idea, but more precise was to put the other rook on c8. To be honest, it seemed even more logical to me, so I am curious what was the reason behind Boris's choice. Maybe he wanted to give his king access to the f8-square, but in reality, the fact that the knight on f6 is extra protected is of more importance in the complications.

20.♔h1?

Shakhriyar underestimates the idea of the third-rank defence. As he later confessed, he had seen the sac itself, but didn't realize that ...♕xc3 had a point. In fact it did, as the bishop on g5 was ruled out and all the ideas of ♗d4 and ♗g5 were no longer connected with an attack, but with a disgusting endgame.

After the game Boris instantly pointed out that 20.♗g5! was stronger. For instance: 20...♔g8!? 21.♗xf6 ♕xf6 22.♖xh7

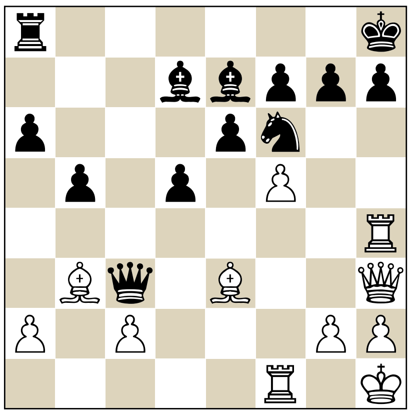


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

22...g6!! (the key of the whole defensive idea. Now White's attacking wave is successfully pushed back) 23.g4! ♖xc3!? 24.bxc3 ♗c5+ 25.♔g2 exf5 26.♗xd5 ♗c6 27.♖h8+! (time to liquidate) 27...♕xh8 28.♕xh8+ ♔xh8 29.♗xc6, and the hurricane has left the city and peace is all that's left.

20...♖xc3! 21.bxc3 ♕xc3!

The point. Now the bishop on e3 is kind of pinned, and without the bishop pair White can't really generate an attack.



22.♖d4?!

Shakh decided to try his luck in a somewhat complicated but clearly worse position rather than defending a worse endgame.

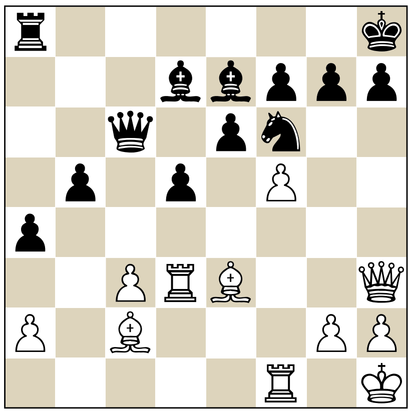
22.g4 is of course insane, because of 22...d4!.

Shakhriyar should have switched to defensive mode, when Gelfand's task would be really difficult: 22.♗d4! ♕xh3 23.♖xh3 and Black is better, for example: 23...a5 24.c3 ♘e4 25.fxe6 ♗xe6 26.♖d3 a4 27.♗d1 ♖c8 28.♗f3 h6, preparing ...♗c5 and ...♗f6, trying to pressurize the c3 pawn.

But as the games of Grischuk show, an advantage doesn't mean a win. Even a win doesn't mean a win...

22...a5! Gelfand perfectly exploits all the pluses of his position, but of course, in the hands of such a player the position just plays itself.

23.♖d3 ♕c6 24.c3 a4 Kicking away the bishop from b3 before playing ...e6-e5 is essential. **25.♗c2**

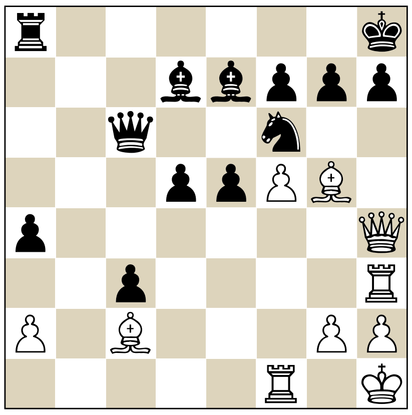


25...e5 26.♗g5 b4!

The right decision. Black's position looks beautiful anyway, but such powerful play is especially strong.

27.♕h4 bxc3 28.♖h3

Mamedyarov keeps on finding attacking resources, but somehow at this point it already seemed clear that Black should be able to neutralize those last tries and gradually promote his centre.



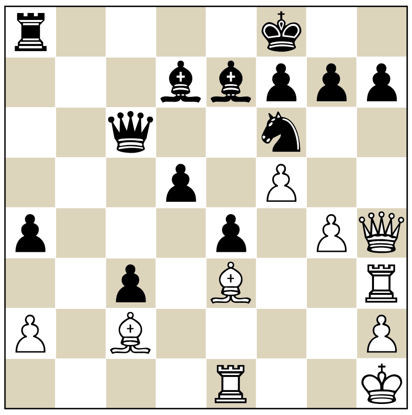
28...♔g8! The only prophylaxis needed! From now on Black can concentrate on his own business.

29.♖e1

After 29.♗xf6 ♗xf6 30.♕xh7+ ♔f8 it's a beautiful position, isn't it!

29...e4 30.g4 Again, Shakh doesn't give up. He uses all the resources there are! But that day Boris was merciless.

30...♔f8! 31.♗e3



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31...♕c4!

Taking control of d4 and also eyeing a2 a bit...

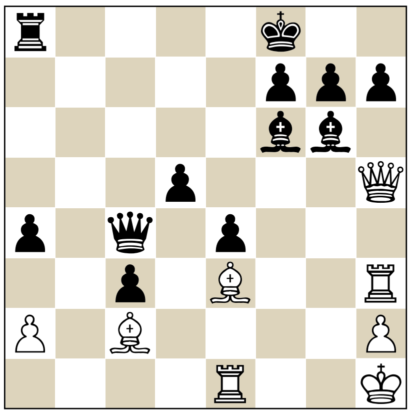
32.g5 ♗xf5!

The point of Black's defence. He just gives a piece for full control of the whole board!

33.gxf6 ♗xf6

By the way, Black is already a rook behind, but Gelfand was clearly only counting pawns!

34.♕h5 ♗g6!



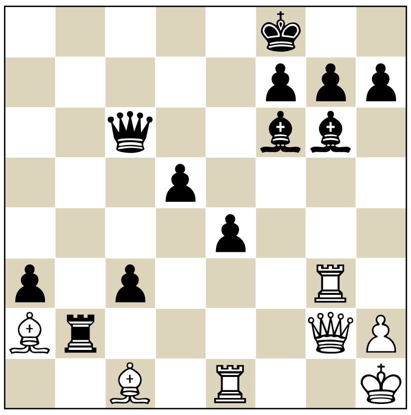
It was also good to take the rook, but this move is much more conceptual. I am sure Boris was just enjoying his position.

35.♕g4 ♕xa2!

A really experienced player always uses an opportunity to snatch a pawn!

36.♗b1 ♕c4 37.♕g2 a3 38.♗a2 ♕c6 39.♖g3 ♖b8

And here, having had enough, Mamedyarov resigned. Just for the show, it would have been nice to execute two more moves: 40.♗c1 ♖b2!!.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A beautiful sight... and a beautiful game in general!

■ ■ ■

Semi-Final Kramnik-Grischuk

Many people called the Russian derby the 'premature final', and they turned out to be wrong, as the winner of the whole cycle was playing in the other match. Kramnik continued demonstrating phenomenal preparation as Black: he made draws so easily and quickly in the Queen's Gambit and the Petroff Defence that in the tiebreak Grischuk simply refused to play as White and offered draws on the 14th and eighth (!) moves.

This match was memorable for the discussions about the death of classical games that the grandmasters had in the press centre. Kramnik complained about the computer programs that emasculate the openings – with the active assistance of researchers like Kramnik, I would add. Then again, the ex-world champion wasn't planning to 'evade responsibility' either: 'I realize that I'm the last person who should be talking about this, but I don't like this situation. But there's no choice – if you want to achieve success, you have to do this kind of dull work. I'd be the first to vote 'yes' with both hands and even pay for it if all computer programs could be abolished from today on. By the way, after dinner once, going mad from variations, my seconds and I discussed whether it was time to introduce some small changes in the rules. For example, I had an idea – ban castling before the 10th move. The essence of the game doesn't change, but all theory has to be created from scratch, and we'll play peacefully for about 50 years! Or abolish taking *en passant*.'

Grischuk was in a more pessimistic mood: 'I think that we are attending the funeral for classical chess. The level of decisiveness is the same as in draughts. Of course, this is very upsetting, but perhaps we're doing the right thing.'

Alexander, why do you prefer rapid to classical? 'There are sprinters and there are marathon runners. For some people it's easier to maintain a comparatively high level of concentration for four or five hours, for others half an hour to an hour, but that's all.'

In my view, all these conversations about the death of classical chess would have ended immedi-

VLADIMIR BARSKY

Vladimir Kramnik brought two seconds to Kazan: Zakhar Efimenko and, surprise, surprise, Sergey Karjakin!

ately if Kramnik had made good on his huge advantage in the fourth game. Grischuk also endured quite a few unpleasant minutes in the rapid games. But in the blitz luck was smiling on him. It has long been noted that if a player goes too deep into the opening nuances you lose playing qualities, your ease and precision in making decisions. But gaps in opening knowledge are fraught with the risk that you won't get into the battle at all, so it's very important to find a 'golden mean' in your preparation. I think that Kramnik's failure in Monaco speaks to the fact that he was too keen on 'academic research' in the opening. By Kazan he had improved his sporting form, but it was still far from his true possibilities.

By the way, when Gelfand was told what Grischuk had said about a funeral for classical chess, Boris just laughed: 'Well, he's been saying that ever since he started playing chess! Today is no exception.'

Semi-Final Gelfand-Kamsky

On the rest day Kamsky went to the hairdresser, and his short haircut got even shorter. Gata's appearance was a little frightening, but Gelfand apparently wasn't bothered by his change of image.

Four years ago the rivals played a Candidates' match in Elista, and back then Kamsky had clear gaps in his opening preparation. In the intervening years he corrected the situation. Gelfand testifies to this: 'Kamsky turned out to have brilliant preparation – he played the Najdorf very well as White, and as Black he "closed" the Grünfeld. For me this was the most difficult match. In the tiebreak the situation became critical for me, I had to win as Black on command. The rapid games were very low quality; this was my worst-ever tiebreak.'

At first it seemed that the Elista scenario could repeat itself. In the first game Gelfand easily defended a slightly worse Sicilian endgame, and in the second, choosing a rare response to the Grünfeld Defence, he got a huge advantage, but he didn't take it to victory. Kamsky played the third game brilliantly and should have won; true, he messed up in time trouble and even narrowly missed losing.

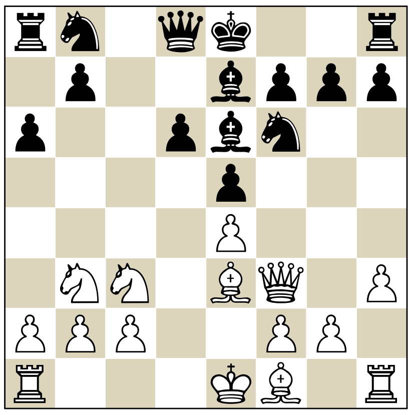
NOTES BY
Jan Timman

SI 14.8 – B90
Gata Kamsky
Boris Gelfand
Kazan 2011, 3rd match game

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e3 e5 7.♘b3 ♗e7 8.h3

This move was played twice earlier this year. Its intention is to develop the queen to f3. It will probably be the big fashion very soon.

8...♗e6 9.♕f3

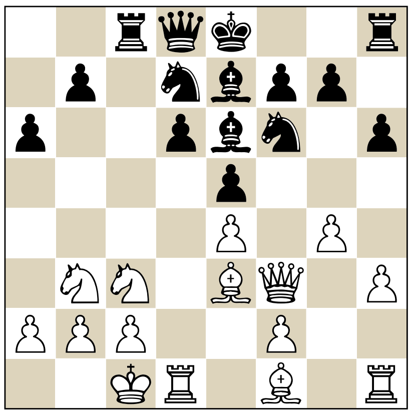


It is interesting to compare this system with what Short did against Grandelius in the Najdorf in Malmö 2009, viz. 6.♕f3. In these circumstances, the queen move is far more justified. Black has already played e7-e5, so the strategic battle is partly about control of square d5. By developing his queen to f3 White prepares expansion on the kingside with g2-g4 at a later stage, possibly followed by h3-h4 and g4-g5.

9...♘bd7

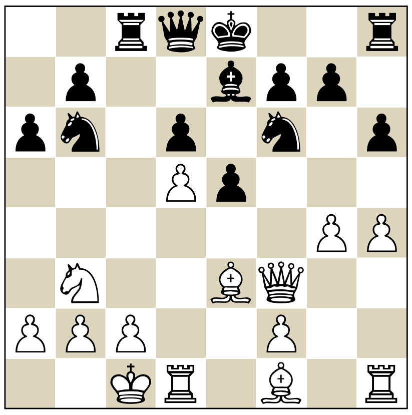
In Fedorchuk-Bajarani, Nakhchivan 2011, Black played 9...0-0, but this proved to be too dangerous.

10.g4 h6 11.0-0-0 ♖c8

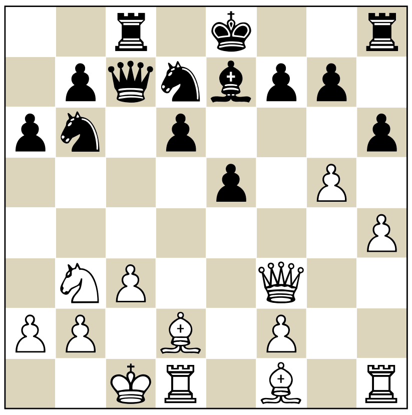


The crucial move. Black more or less forces White to take his knight to d5 to prevent Black from being able to make an excellent positional exchange sacrifice on c3. In Navin-Surendran, Kochi 2011, Black went 11...♕c7, after which White continued with 12.♔b1 and got an advantage.

12.♘d5 ♗xd5 13.exd5 ♘b6 14.h4!



The sharpest continuation. White sacrifices his d-pawn in order to be able to launch a kingside attack at the shortest possible notice. **14...♕c7 15.c3 ♘bxd5** White cannot capture the knight, as he would lose material after 16.♖xd5 ♕c6. **16.♗d2** Keeping the bishop pair. **16...♘b6 17.g5 ♘fd7** It goes without saying that Black must not open the h-file.



Gata Kamsky came excellently prepared. The U.S. Champion got one foot into the final, but a missed tactic in the fourth rapid game broke his resistance.

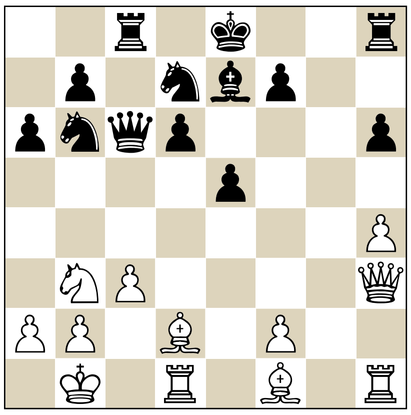
18.gxh6

An interesting alternative was 18.g6. By sacrificing another pawn White creates dangerous attacking chances. After both 18...fxg6 19.♗d3 ♘f8 20.♕g3 followed by 21.f4, and 18...0-0 19.♕h5 fxg6 20.♕xg6 ♖f6 21.♕g4 Black has his defensive work cut out for him. But it is not necessary to sacrifice a second pawn, since after the text, too, White continues to exert strong pressure on the enemy position.

18...gxh6 19.♔b1

Finally, White has time for his standard move. The open g-file and his superiority more than compensate for the pawn. Besides, the position is easier to play for White, and the black king will find it hard to find a safe spot.

19...♕c6 20.♕h3



20...d5

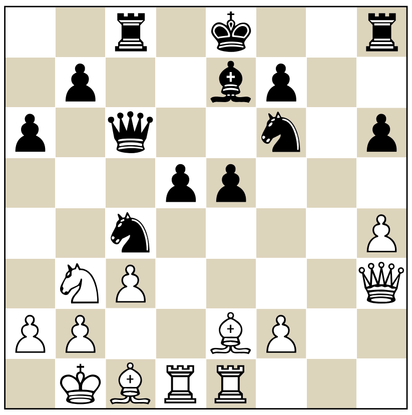
It is understandable that Black wants to underline his central superiority, but I still regard the text-move as inaccurate. A possible alternative was 20...♘c4, with the intention of meeting 21.♗c1 with 21...♘f6, when the black position is slightly more solid. Black should only play 22...d5 after White's 22.♗g2, when the white bishop has little business on the long diagonal.

21.♗e2

Up to his point, Kamsky has played with great energy. The text is his first hesitation, undoubtedly caused by the enormous tension generated by the match situation.

A strong alternative was 21.f4, intending to meet 21...e4 with 22.♘d4, followed by action with 23.♖g1. White has the position fully under control.

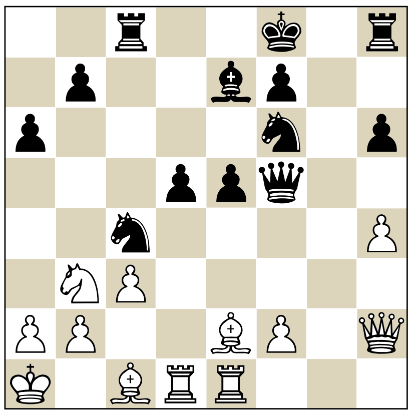
21...♘c4 22.♗c1 ♘f6 23.♖he1



23...♕e6

This centralization is not exactly wrong, but there was no reason to remove the queen from the queenside. Better was 23...b5, partly to reinforce the position of the knight and partly in order to possible launch a counter-offensive on the queenside. Remarkably enough, Gelfand continues to think better of the traditional Sicilian advance of the b-pawn. Could he have been playing with the thought of hiding his king behind the b-pawn by artificially castling queenside? This plan seems too time-consuming; the position is too dynamic to allow him to hatch plans.

24.♕h2 ♕f5+ 25.♔a1 ♔f8



A hesitant move. It's not quite clear what would be the safest place for the king, but with the open g-file, f8 wouldn't seem to be a good square. But Black is facing a difficult defence anyway. Whereas White only has to line up his pieces, Black must always ensure that he maintains a solid defensive line, which requires extremely accurate play.

26.f3

An alternative was 26.♗f1 in order to open the e-file for the rook and possibly play the king's bishop to h3.

26...♗d6 27.♕g1 ♗b8

An error that Kamsky fails to exploit at once. Black should have withdrawn his queen with 27...♕d7, after which White doesn't have a direct assault and the black defences will hold for now. But from a psychological point of view it was hard to withdraw the

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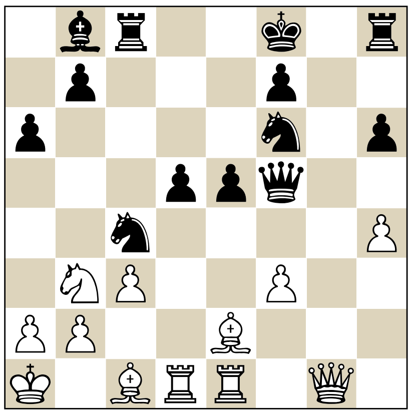
queen, as this would boil down to an admission that the previous queen manoeuvre had been wrong.



28.♗d3

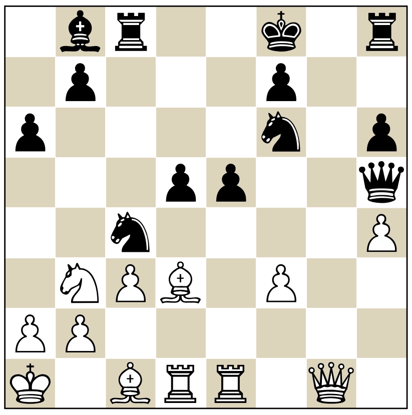
Very strong was 28.♗xc4, when Black has two ways to recapture:

A) 28...dxc4 29.♘c5! ♗a7 30.♗e3, and White's pressure is paralyzing;

B) 28...♖xc4 is strategically best, but here, too, White gets a winning advantage with energetic play: 29.♕b6! ♗c7 30.♕xb7 ♔g7, and now the computer indicates 31.f4! as winning. After 31...exf4 32.♖e7 ♕g4 33.♖de1 Black has no adequate defence. But it was hard, of course, to calculate this variation.

28...♕h5?

Nerves are coming into play. With the queen on the edge, taking on c4 is even stronger. Necessary was 28...♕d7, with a difficult but as yet tenable position.



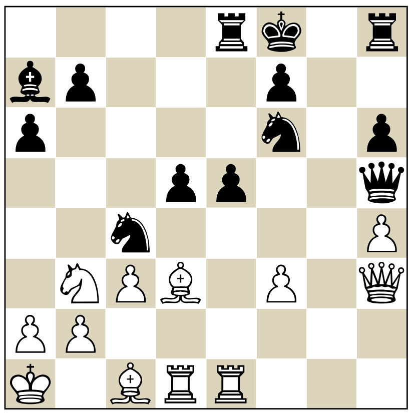
29.♕h1? A strangely passive move. White covers two pawns that Black wasn't threatening by putting his queen on a far inferior square.

29.♗xc4 would have been winning again. The main line goes as follows: 29...dxc4 30.♕b6! ♕f5 31.♘c5 ♕xf3 (there is nothing better) 32.♘e6+!, and after this pseudo-sacrifice the black position collapses.

It seems that both players kept declining to capture on c4 for strategic reasons, and it's true that in strictly positional terms it is not correct to give up the king's bishop for a knight, since White's strategy is based on controlling the light squares. But in this position dynamic considerations also play a part: the queen penetrating on b6, where it blows up the black defences.

29...♗a7 30.♕h3 ♖e8

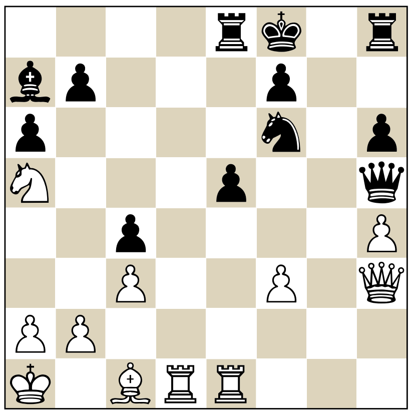
Gelfand was probably so chuffed with the way things were going that he let down his guard somewhat. More accurate was 30...♖c7, intending to recapture on c4 with the rook.



31.♗xc4 Better late than never. Although the swap is less effective now, White had nothing better.

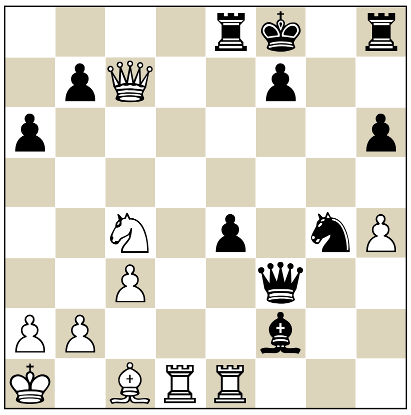
31...dxc4 32.♘a5

But now White loses his central control. With 32.♘d2 he would have retained his advantage.



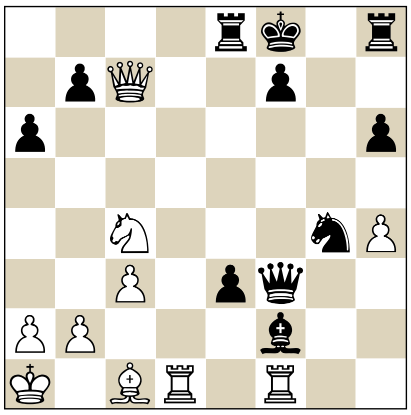
32...e4! Gelfand in his element. In purely dynamic play he is at his best. The advance of the e-pawn yields Black sufficient counterplay.

33.♘xc4 ♕xf3 34.♕h2 ♘g4 35.♕c7 ♗f2



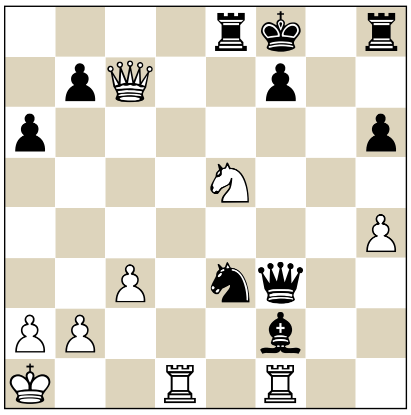
36.♖f1 The start of a combination that turns to be less than watertight. After 36.♖g1 the position would have been dynamically balanced. A sample variation would be: 36...♗xg1 37.♖xg1 e3 38.♘xe3! ♘xe3 39.♕d6+ ♖e7 40.♕d8+, and a draw through perpetual check.

36...e3 Of course. Now Black is threatening to turn the tables.



37.♗xe3 This was the idea; but it turns out to be incorrect. Necessary was 37.♕d6+. After 37...♔g8 38.♕d7 ♖e6 39.♕d8+ ♔h7 40.♕d3+ ♕e4 41.♕e2 he could have avoided the worst.

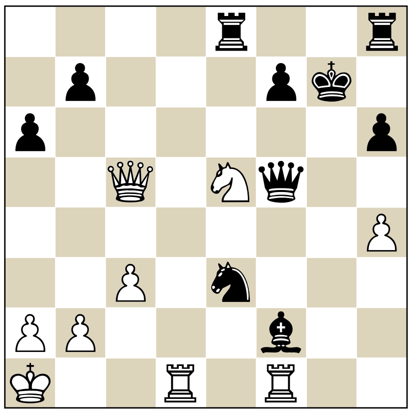
37...♘xe3 38.♘e5 Where is the black queen supposed to go?



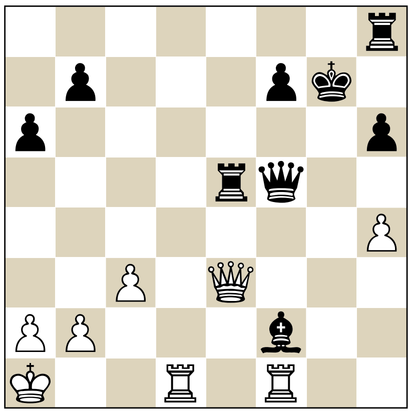
38...♕f5 Gelfand goes for the wrong square. After 38...♕h5! he would have been winning. The lines are not difficult: after 39.♖d7 ♕xe5 40.♖xf7+ ♔g8 White is finished.

It's a nice coincidence that, 10 moves earlier, Gelfand did opt for the h5 square for his queen, although it could have lost him the game then.

39.♕c5+ ♔g7



40.♕xe3 The saving move. And the players have made the time-control as well. **40...♖xe5**



41.♕xf2 After the time-trouble horrors Kamsky decides to liquidate to a double rook ending bereft of any life. With 41.♕d2 he could have tried to go for a win. On the next move he would have taken on f2 with the rook, and with all major pieces on the board, White is better in view of the safer position of his king.

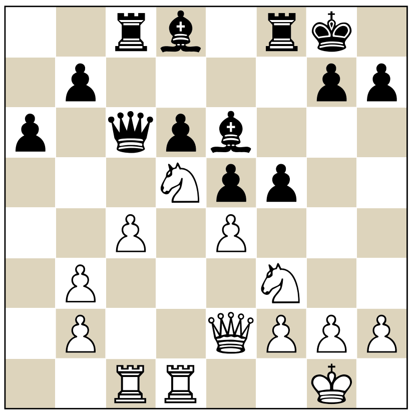
41...♕xf2 42.♖xf2 ♖he8 43.♖g1+ ♔f8 44.♔b1 ♖e2 45.♖f4 ♖8e4 46.♖gf1 ♖e1+ 47.♔c2 ♖4e2+ 48.♔b3 ♖xf1 49.♖xf1 ♔g7 50.♖f4 ♖e6 51.a4 ♔g6 52.♔c4 f5 53.a5 ♔f6 54.♔d3 ♖e7

Draw.

■ ■ ■

In the fourth Gata demonstrated his analysis in the Grünfeld, which he had forgotten in the second game, and easily made a draw.

The tiebreak was so tense that the diagrams can tell the story more eloquently than any words.



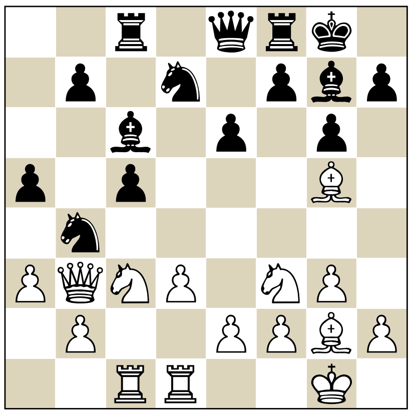
Kamsky-Gelfand (rapid-2)
position after 18...f5

Gelfand played the first game surprisingly passively as White, but he found a beautiful 'dismount'.

In the second it was Kamsky whose play was patchy.

19.exf5?? ♗xf5??

The straightforward 19...♗xd5 20.♖xd5 ♕xd5 21.cxd5 ♖xc1+ 22.♘e1 ♗a5 won with White losing all his pieces. But this way the game ended in a draw.



Gelfand-Kamsky (rapid-3)
position after 16.a3

By playing 16.a3?, White removed the last free square from his queen...

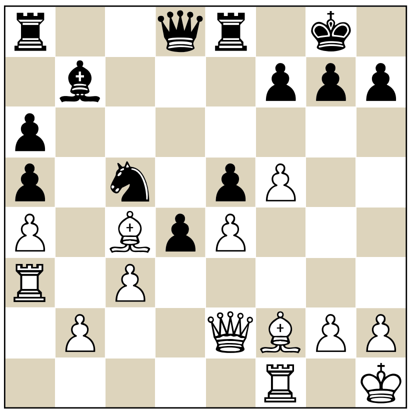
16...c4! 17.♕xc4

Or 17.dxc4 ♘c5, and the queen is in a trap.

17...♗xf3 18.♗xf3 ♖xc4 19.dxc4 ♘c6

White only had a rook and pawn for the queen, and he soon resigned.

How to win as Black on command? Gelfand was lucky that his opponent demonstrated how principled he was and didn't shy away from sharp Sicilians. In the Scheveningen Gelfand seized the initiative, but then missed a simple tactic.



Kamsky-Gelfand (rapid-4)
position after 24...bxa5

25.♕h5?
After 25.♗xf7+! ♔xf7 26.♕c4+ ♔f8 27.♕xc5+ ♔g8 28.♕c4+ ♔h8 29.♕e2, even if White can't take advantage of his extra pawn, he certainly won't lose. Gata didn't notice this possibility and gradually lost. Not recovering from this blow (after all, he'd had one foot in the final!), Kamsky lost both blitz games.

Final Gelfand-Grischuk

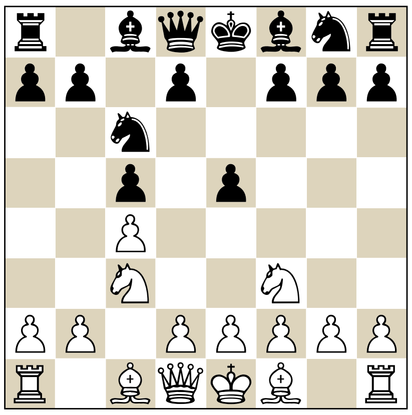
A person who had predicted this final pairing before the start of the matches could probably have ruined the bookmakers. But in Kazan these grandmasters really did play better than the others. Gelfand brought in Pavel Eljanov to assist him in the final, and the teams of seconds equalized in numbers: 3-3.

When the final started, I couldn't shake the feeling that Kramnik's shadow was still in Kazan. Having figured out that Grischuk had no weighty arguments against the Queen's Gambit, Gelfand immediately included it in his repertoire, and switched to the English Opening as White.

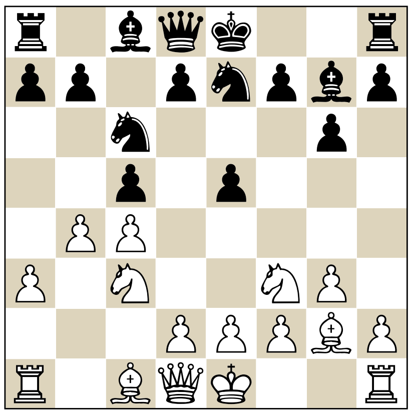
NOTES BY
Anish Giri

EO 28.10 – A37
Boris Gelfand
Alexander Grischuk
Kazan 2011, 1st match game

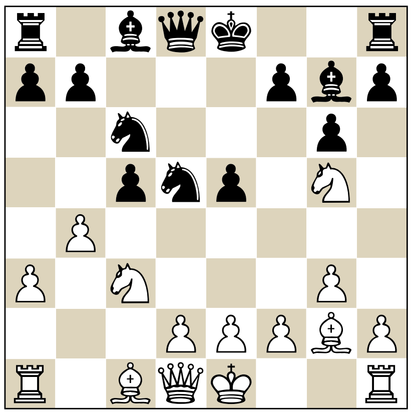
1.♘f3
By the final stage the opening repertoire of the remaining players was clear: Gelfand was defending the Queen's Gambit Declined, while Grischuk's choice was the counterattacking Grünfeld. Just like Kramnik, Gelfand doesn't want to enter any theoretical discussions in the main lines and prefers to fight on the deep positional grounds of the English Opening.
1...c5
Unlike Kamsky, Grischuk doesn't mind to get out of the Grünfeld. A lot of true Grünfeld players still try to get what they want and insist on the ...♘f6-♗g7-d5 scheme, but White has lots of ideas there, as you can clearly see from the games Topalov-Kamsky from the first round, when in both games Topalov was fully armed with ideas.
2.c4 ♘c6 3.♘c3 e5



The advantage of developing the queen's knight first. The other knight will probably enjoy the e7-square and in general this line is considered fine for Black...
4.g3 g6 5.♗g2 ♗g7 6.a3
In such a structure White usually tries to expand on the queenside with b4. In this game Gelfand decided to experiment and try to execute this plan before Black could fully develop his pieces. But White couldn't develop either...
6.d3 is more cautious and was tried by Boris in his next white encounter against Grischuk.
6...♘ge7 7.b4!?
As promised, Gelfand quickly blows up the queenside. By the way, Black often prevents this with ...a5, so there is something principled about this early expansion.



7...d5!
In the spirit of the position! Black is using White's lack of development and points out that he would be happy to open the centre. The a1-h8 diagonal also becomes a source of worry for White now.
8.cxd5 ♘xd5 9.♘g5!?
Some nice bits of geometry here... Usually such geometry leads to very exciting complications, and this is not an exception!



9...♘c7!
After 9...♘xc3 10.dxc3 the knight is protected, and after 10...♕xd1+ 11.♔xd1 the fact that White has lost the right to castle is of less impor-

VLADIMIR BARSKY

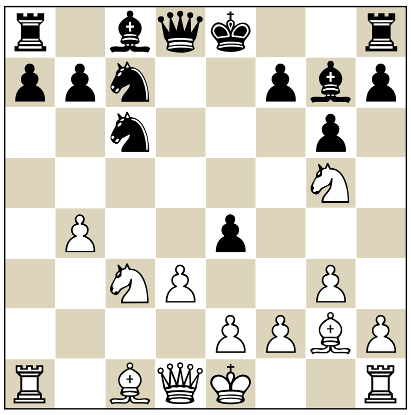
Alexander Grischuk: 'There's a saying – God made people different, but Colonel Colt gave them equal rights. Roughly the same thing can be said about the Queen's Gambit.'

tance than his queenside pressure and clearly better pawn structure.

10.d3!

Time to protect the knight and develop. White is not scared of the motifs on the long diagonal... because he came well prepared.

10...cxb4 11.axb4 e4!

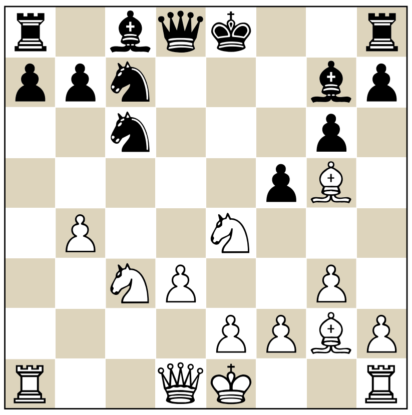


The point. Now the big mess started, but not surprisingly both opponents were still within their preparation and knew what they were getting into. By the way, this is a pretty standard idea in a lot of English positions, watch out!

12.♘gxe4

12.♕b3 would be an easy solution, but it just gives Black too much time to develop and grab the initiative: 12...0-0 13.♘gxe4 ♗e6 14.♕b2 ♘b5!? 15.♗d2 ♘cd4, with the knight coming to b3. Also, ...f5 is always in the air. White would happily go 16.♗g5, with the idea of closing the diagonal with the knight or ♗f6, in case the black queen moves, but there is a small problem... 16...♘xc3! 17.♗xd8 ♘xe4, and Black will soon win too much material for the queen.

12...f5 13.♗g5

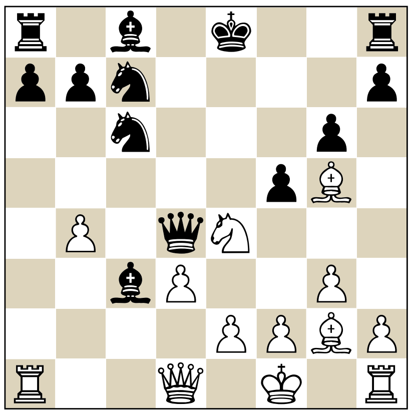


13...♗xc3+

13...♕d4 seems to make sense too, but in fact it's bad due to a long but beautiful sequence: 14.e3 ♕xb4 15.♗f6!, and White somehow manages to save all his pieces and retain a huge positional edge: 15...♗xf6 16.♘xf6+ ♔e7 17.♕d2! ♔xf6 18.♗xc6!.

14.♔f1 Precisely the point, obviously.

14...♕d4

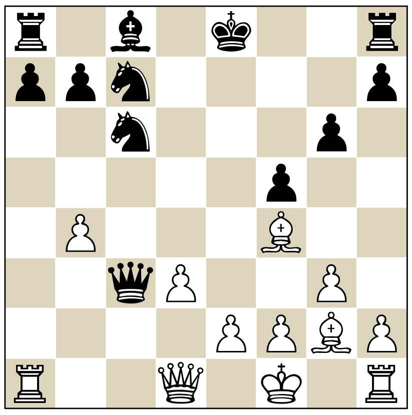


15.♘xc3!?

One of the possible ways to win back some material (fun is fun, but material should be grabbed back!).

15.♗f6 was also possible, and after the sequence 15...♗xa1 16.♗xd4 ♗xd4 17.♘d6+ ♔e7 18.♘xc8+ ♖hxc8 a very unclear position arises. The strong e3-d4 pawn chain will soon appear and look scary, but both players probably correctly judged that Black's pieces will fully compensate for that.

15...♕xc3 16.♗f4!



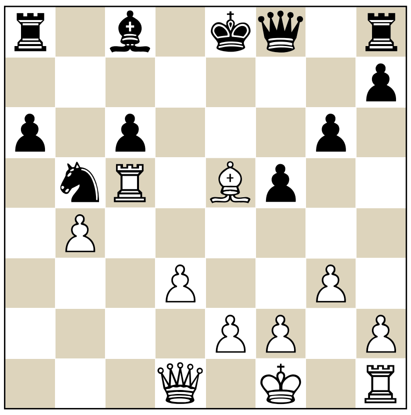
The key move. White actually weakens the black rook on a8!

16...♘b5

One of the two possible knight moves. 16...♘e6 was another possibility. Now another forced sequence will pass like a tornado: 17.♖c1 ♕xb4 18.♖xc6 bxc6 19.♗xc6+ ♔f7 20.♗xa8 ♘xf4 21.gxf4 ♗e6 22.♗f3, and in this position White has some optical edge due to his central pawns, but once the a-pawn starts running, it will be no fun anymore. I would say the position is balanced.

16...♕g7 seems strong and safe to the human eye, but in fact Black is unable to save material after 17.♖c1 a6 18.♕a4! 0-0 19.♗xc7 ♕xc7 20.b5!.

17.♖c1 ♕f6 18.♖c5! a6 19.♗xc6+ bxc6 20.♗e5 ♕f8

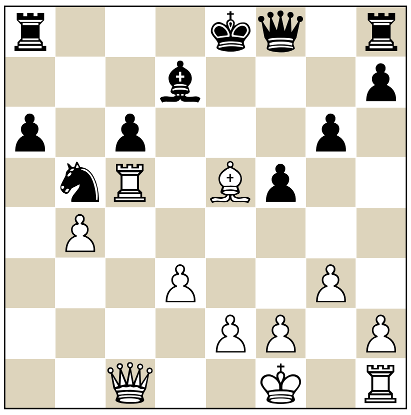


Here, finally, a position has been reached. No more forced lines, just compensation and a concept. White has a conceptual choice: to take the exchange, thus win back some material, restore some balance, but lose his attacking chances. Or to try to go all out and attack with the bishop on e5. I think that, practically speaking, the second choice was better, or at least it's the only way to fight for anything. And it seems as if Boris agreed...

21.♕c1!?

An interesting move. Now the threat is ♖xb5, and after ...♗d7, ...♖xc6 is in the air. Plus, the queen takes some control of the dark squares.

21...♗d7



22.♗xh8?

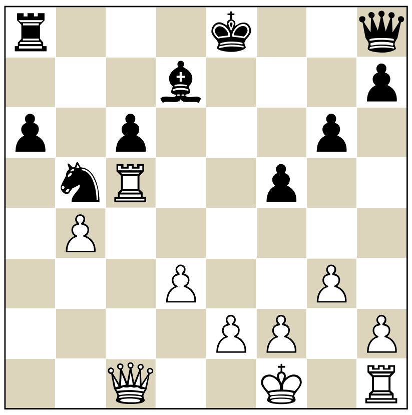
Gelfand was clearly disappointed with his preparation and decided to just take the simple path... but he didn't manage to equalize with this approach. In fact, in one way he had a choice, but in another way he didn't.

22.♔g2 was interesting and seemed the most natural to me, but the problem is that it's hard to open the files: 22...♖g8 23.♖e1 g5!, and Black will meet e4 with ...f4, while ...♖g6 is also an idea. White hasn't achieved anything here.

22.♕c4! was the strongest move. The point is fantastic – it's in fact a prophylactic move against ...♖g8!: 22...h5! (22...♖g8 23.♗f6!! wins on the spot), preparing a rook lift to h7 or even h6. The position is dynamically balanced here: 23.♖xc6!? ♗xc6 24.♕xc6+ ♔e7 25.♔g2, and even though the maximum White gets here is a draw, it's probably also the minimum.

22.♖xc6 is possible, but maybe too early – 22...♖g8!? (22...♗xc6 23.♕xc6+ ♔e7 24.e4!? – 24.♔g2) 23.♖c5 ♕e7, and Black is much more solid than you could imagine.

22...♕xh8



23.♕e3+?!

Gelfand continues his strategy of exchanging everything and making a draw, but he probably didn't realize that Black doesn't have to exchange rooks!

Something more logical like 23.♔g2 ♔f7 24.h4 h5 25.♖e1, semi-threatening e4, would have been stronger.

23...♔f7 24.♖e5

Левон Аронян
Александр Грищук
Шахрияр Мамедьяров
МАТЧИ
ПРЕТЕНДЕ
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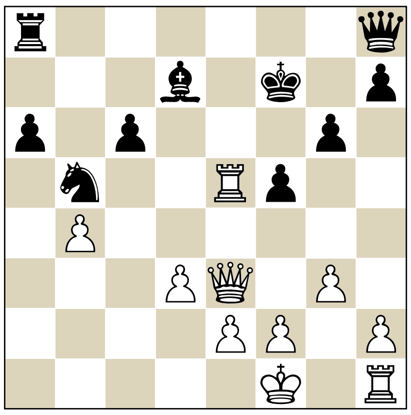
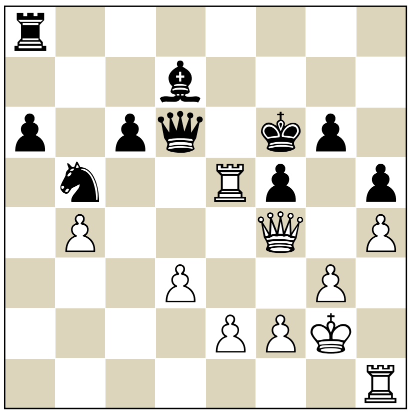
VLADIMIR BARSKY

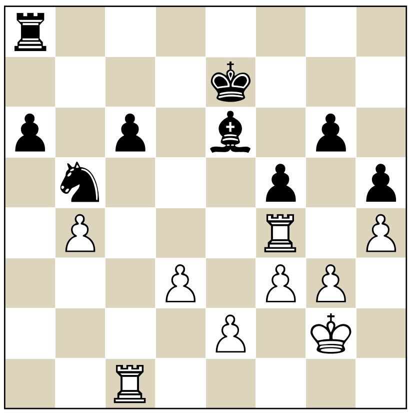
Grim and determined faces at the start of Game 6. With brilliant play Boris Gelfand ended a series of five draws and qualified for the title match against Vishy Anand.



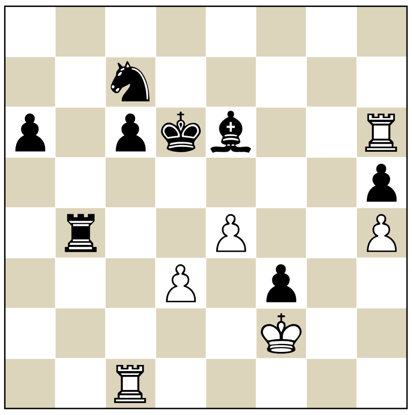
24...♕f8!
Gelfand had probably missed this annoying idea. Indeed, why would Black exchange rooks? The king on f1 will be stuck there for too long and the rook e5 alone can do no harm.
25.h4 h5! A bold and strong way to stop any counterplay. **26.♕f4 ♕d6 27.♔g2 ♔f6!**



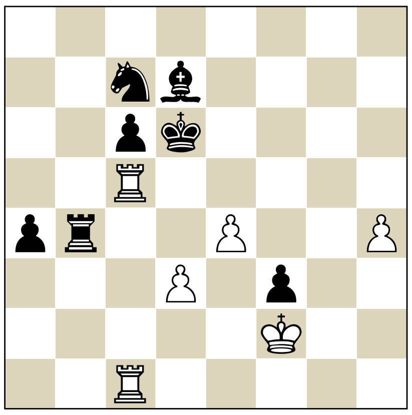
The king doesn't mind advancing if the army really needs it.
28.♖e4 Gelfand probably correctly decided to trap his own rook on f4, but with the idea of getting at least some potential counterplay connected with e4 and g4 . **28...♕xf4 29.♖xf4 ♗e6 30.♖c1 ♔e7!** With modest tactics, Black brings his king to the centre.
31.f3



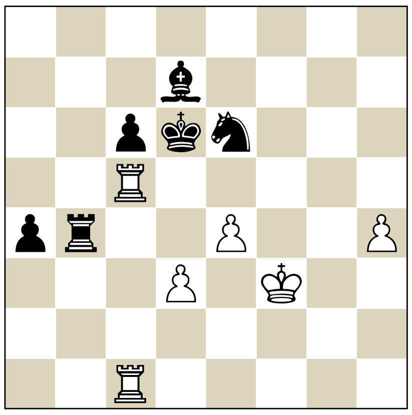
31...♔d6
In hindsight, moving the king to d7 would have made sense, but one must be a really deep and sophisticated player to sense such a nuance. And actually I am not sure that it would really be stronger. White is not bound to repeat what he did in the game.
After 31...♔d7!? White can try to blow up everything immediately: 32.g4!? fxg4 33.fxg4 ♗xg4 (33...hxg4 34.♖c5) 34.♖f7+ ♔e6 35.♖g7 ♔f6 36.♖b7 ♖c8 37.♖b6, and I can go on and on with this semi-forced line. In the end it would probably be some draw by some margin. Or the reverse. But probably a draw. Chess is such a drawish game, really...
32.♔f2 ♖b8 33.e4 ♘c7 34.g4 fxg4 35.♖f6 gxf3 36.♖xg6 ♖xb4 37.♖h6



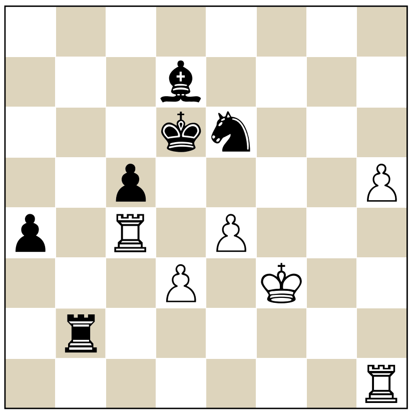
37...a5 38.♖xh5 a4 Run!
39.♖hc5! It's important to distract the bishop, while at the same time covering the second rank.
39...♗d7



40.♔xf3!?
Not the only move, but when you have such a broad choice and it's move 40, it's logical that at the end what you do is just snatch the pawn (plus we remember Boris's greedy play against Mamedyarov when he took 7 pawns off him and returning just one)!
40.h5 was also an option, obviously. Just run with the pawn, as far as possible. But Black has a good chance of winning once the knight appears on e6.
40...♘e6
40...a3 was also possible, to just push the pawn and see how far it gets... but it wouldn't get too far – 41.♖a5!.



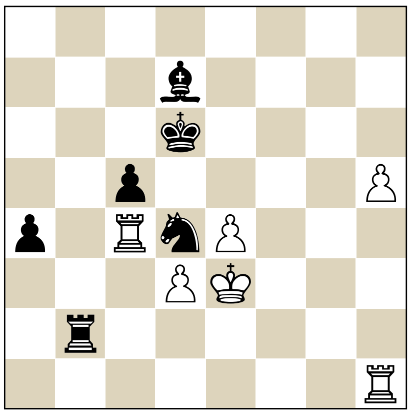
41.♖5c4?
41.♖a5 was optically stronger, and not just optically: 41...c5 42.h5 ♘d4+ 43.♔e3, and White just gets a better version of the game.
41...c5! I think every chess player enjoys such moments when there is clearly one strong, very sound move to improve the position of all pieces in one go...
42.h5 ♖b2 43.♖h1



43...♘d4+?
I think that in terms of statistics and chances, Grischuk had the best chances to win the game at this point. Grischuk's idea to mate his opponent's king was interesting, but in fact White has two ways to escape from the mat-

ing net, one by giving an exchange for the bishop and another by giving it for the knight. Both ways lead to a draw... 43...a3!, pushing the pawn, would be stronger, and now 44.♔g3!. Boris is very strong, but I can't imagine a human being playing this ingenious move. I still don't really understand the point, but it's definitely somewhere deep down. 44...a2 45.♖a1 ♘g5, and I would choose the simple path and say that White will probably be able to somehow make a draw with really exact play, but of course, in a practical game, the chances are at least fifty-fifty, as the first move of a long variation is already amazing: 46.♔f4!!.

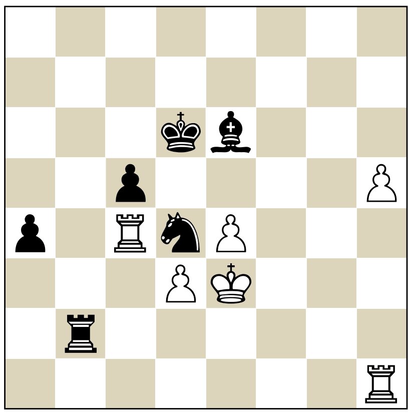
44.♔e3



44...♗e6

Continuing to build a mating net that the white king will somehow manage to escape.

44...♖e2+ was another try, but I think that it's already closer to a draw than to a win: 45.♔f4 ♖f2+ 46.♔e3! (just going back. When you have such an endgame it's no longer about dignity...) 46...♖f3+ 47.♔d2, and Black has a lot of ways to try, but probably no ways to win.



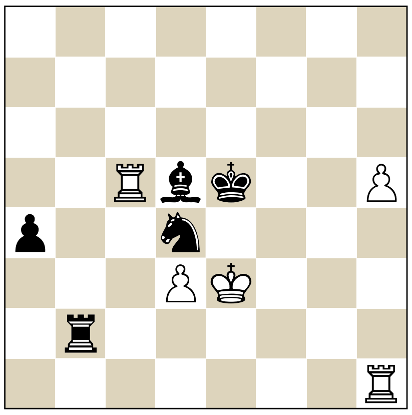
45.e5+

One of two possible drawing sacrifices. 45.♖xa4!? was also possible: after 45...♔e5 Black has achieved his dream, but now a desperate-looking attempt, 46.♖xd4!, actually leads to a draw: 46...cxd4+ 47.♔f3 ♖b8 48.h6 ♖f8+ 49.♔g3 ♖g8+ 50.♔f2 ♔f4 51.h7 ♖h8 52.♖h6 ♗d7. White maybe doesn't even have to get into the rook & bishop vs rook, and can just sit back and wait, as Black can't really make any progress.

45...♔xe5

45...♔d5 also looked interesting to me, but in fact the f5-square is of no use for Black, as after 46.h6 things end in a draw one way or the other.

46.♖xc5+ ♗d5



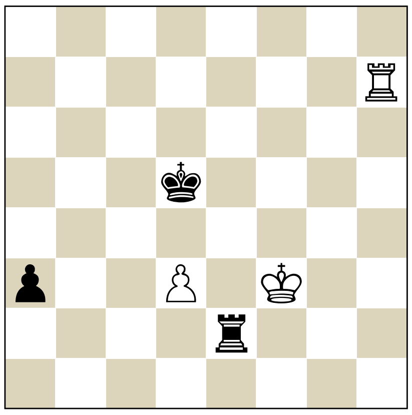
47.♖xd5+! Funny how people keep on giving exclams to these kinds of only moves. Yet I will do it too.

47...♔xd5 48.h6 ♖e2+ 48...♘f5+ 49.♔f3! was no better, although White shouldn't walk into an obvious trap: 49.♔f4?? instead of 49.♔f3: 49...♖f2+ 50.♔g4 ♘xh6+ 51.♖xh6 a3, and now, all of a sudden, it's too far.

49.♔f4 ♘e6+ 50.♔g3 ♘f8 51.h7

Gelfand had enough time to make sure that he can make a luxury draw, without even having to make a few moves in the rook & knight vs rook endgame that would arise after 51.♖a1.

51...♘xh7 52.♖xh7 a3 53.♔f3



53...♖e1

53...a2 54.♖a7 ♖h2 55.♔e3 ♔c5 leads to another type of draw: 56.d4+ ♔b4 57.♔f4! ♔b3 58.♔e5 ♖h1 59.d5, and White is just in time to queen his pawn after 59...a1♕+ 60.♖xa1 ♖xa1 61.d6.

54.♖a7 ♖a1 55.♔e3 a2 56.♖a5+! ♔c6 57.♔d4!

And here too, White is just in time to hide his king in front of the pawn.

57...♔b6 58.♖a8 ♔b7

Draw.

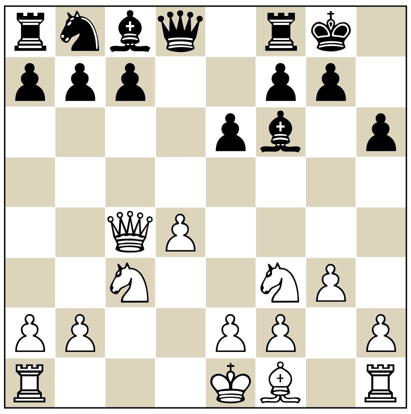
■ ■ ■

MATTEN
SCHAAKVERHALEN
MET MAGNUS CARLSEN NAAR AJAX

MATTEN 9
VERSCHIJNT OP 23 JUNI

In the third game Boris, as Black, demonstrated a super-novelty:

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗e7 5.♗g5 h6 6.♗xf6 ♗xf6 7.♕b3 dxc4 8.♕xc4 0-0 9.g3



9...b5!

'There's a saying – God made people different, but Colonel Colt gave them equal rights. I think roughly the same thing can be said about the Queen's Gambit. This move is somewhat surprising, as the pawn puts itself under two attacks. I think White has lots of opportunities here to lose by force, and some variations are horribly dangerous. For example, 10.♕d3 (an apparently safe move) 10...♗b7 11.♗g2 ♘c6, and it isn't clear how to save the pawn' (Grischuk).

10.♕xb5 ♘d7 11.♗g2 c5 12.0-0 ♖b8 13.♕a4 a5! 14.dxc5

Draw.

'Borya made the precise move 13...a5, otherwise Black could have had problems. In the final position Black has a strong initiative for the pawn, but White shouldn't lose either, of course' (Grischuk).

Black's ninth move was perfectly good, but it was hardly likely to have been thought up by a human being: the program Houdini recommends it.

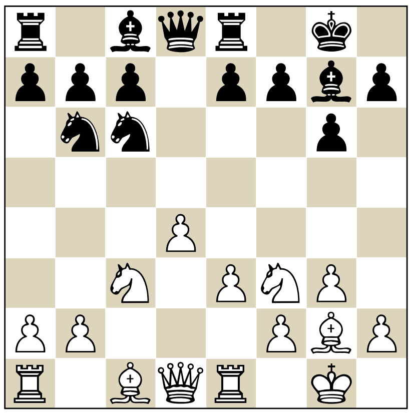
The second game showed that Grischuk had incredibly deep preparation. In order to save himself Gelfand had to demonstrate a miracle of dexterity. Usually Grischuk's face remained absolutely impenetrable (a poker face; it's no coincidence that he likes that game so much), and only after the second game was it noticeable that Alexander was very upset.

In the fourth game, having investigated the opening nuances, Grischuk quickly made a draw as Black. The fate of the match was decided in the final, sixth game. The experienced Gelfand, who had tested his opponent twice in the English Opening, this time played 1.d4 and gave Grischuk a very unpleasant choice. He had played the Grünfeld more than once, but it wasn't the most suitable opening for a duel in which the most important thing was not to lose. If he played something new, though, he would probably reproach himself all the way through for being cowardly. After hesitating a little, Grischuk played the Grünfeld, but it turned out that in the system with the kingside fianchetto White had prepared a booby-trap that would trigger immediately.

NOTES BY
Jan Timman

GI 1.10 – D76
Boris Gelfand
Alexander Grischuk
Kazan 2011, 6th match game

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘f3 ♗g7 4.g3 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♗g2 ♘b6 7.♘c3 ♘c6 8.e3 0-0 9.0-0 ♖e8 10.♖e1



Remarkably enough, both players had had this position on the board as White before. A battle between two experts is on the cards.

10...a5

This advance is the big fashion these days, although it was already being played in the late 1980s. Black awaits further developments in the centre and concentrates on gaining territory on the queenside.

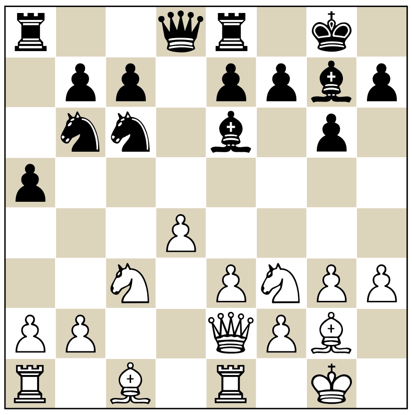
11.♕e2

One of the alternatives here is 11.h3. I mainly say this in view of what happens in the game.

11...♗g4

Quite remarkable. Black provokes h2-h3 to continue in what is, in fact, a theoretical position a tempo down. Wang Yue played the text successfully against Leitao last year. Grischuk is following in his footsteps, a decision he will soon regret.

12.h3 ♗e6



13.b3!

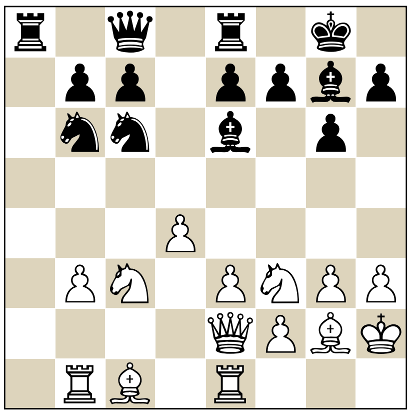
A strong novelty. In the afore-mentioned game Leitao played 13.♖d1, after which Black's 13...♗c4 yielded him insufficient counterplay.

Gelfand's approach is instructive: he takes square c4 away from the black bishop and doesn't mind that his b-pawn will end up isolated. He has rightly come to the conclusion that what's important in this position is influence in the centre and control of vital squares.

13...a4 14.♖b1

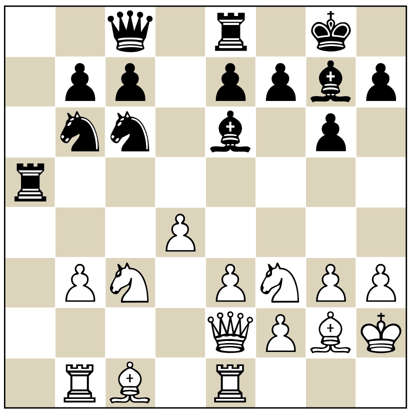
The point of the previous move. White leaves the open a-file to Black; it is more important to keep b3 well protected.

14...axb3 15.axb3 ♕c8 16.♔h2



16...♖a5

In this phase of the game, Grischuk used up oceans of time, later observing that he didn't like the position at all. This means that the plan to take the rook to h5 was born out of necessity, the main problem being that Black's minor pieces are blocking a counterblow in the centre. If he were to try 16...♘a5, intending to meet 17.♕c2 with 17...c5, White would play 17.b4 ♘ac4 18.e4, and Black will have no counterplay.

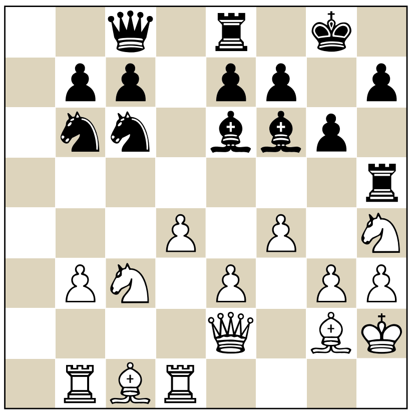


17.♖d1

Naiditsch, in his online comments, called this 'a strange move', but it will soon become clear that Gelfand has shrewdly assessed the situation. After first playing for control of squares he will now consistently attempt to increase his influence in the centre, refusing to be diverted by Black's rook manoeuvre. For that he has an adequate reply up his sleeve.

17...♖h5 18.♘h4 ♗f6 19.f4!

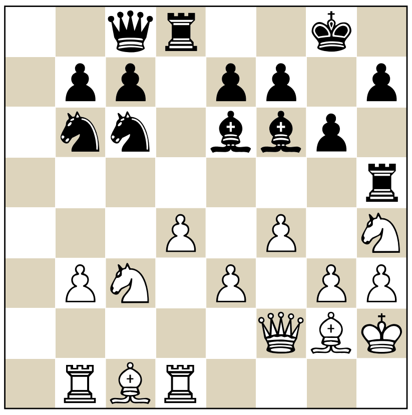
After the game Grischuk said that he hadn't seen this advance coming at all, but for an experienced classical player like Gelfand it must have been the obvious choice. With his enormous influence in the centre he doesn't need to fear any attacks on his king.



19...♖d8

Black must in any case try to keep control of square d5. 19...♗xh4 20.gxh4 ♖xh4 would have run into the very strong 21.♔g3!, when Black would have to sacrifice an exchange. But after 21...♖xh3+ 22.♗xh3 ♗xh3 23.d5 ♘b4 24.♗a3 he would not have sufficient compensation. White remains superior in the centre.

20.♕f2 Extra cover for h4. White is not in any hurry.



20...♗xh4

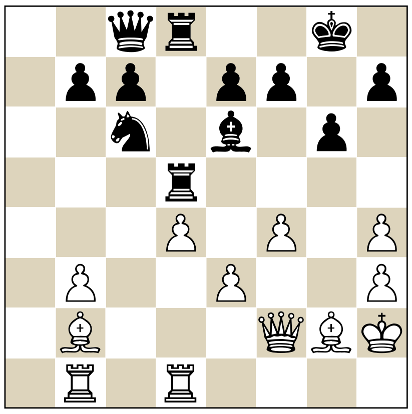
Positional capitulation. Black should in any case have played 20...♘d5, although White would have a large advantage after 21.♘xd5 ♖hxd5 22.♗b2. Black will find it hard to prevent the advance of the white e-pawn in the long run. It would, incidentally, not be a good idea for White to accept the exchange sacrifice on d5, since this would give Black control of the centre and pressure on the light squares.

21.gxh4 ♘d5 22.♘xd5 ♖hxd5 23.♗b2

Threatening 24.e4, and Black will be overrun.

Kazan 2011

Quarter Finals				
Alexander Grischuk	IGM	RUS	2747	**4½**
Levon Aronian	IGM	ARM	2808	**3½**
Boris Gelfand	IGM	ISR	2733	**2½**
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	IGM	AZE	2772	**1½**
Vladimir Kramnik	IGM	RUS	2785	**6½**
Teimour Radjabov	IGM	AZE	2744	**5½**
Gata Kamsky	IGM	USA	2732	**2½**
Veselin Topalov	IGM	BUL	2775	**1½**
Semi-Finals				
Alexander Grischuk	IGM	RUS	2747	**5½**
Vladimir Kramnik	IGM	RUS	2785	**4½**
Boris Gelfand	IGM	ISR	2733	**6**
Gata Kamsky	IGM	USA	2732	**4**
Final				
Boris Gelfand	IGM	ISR	2733	**3½**
Alexander Grischuk	IGM	RUS	2747	**2½**

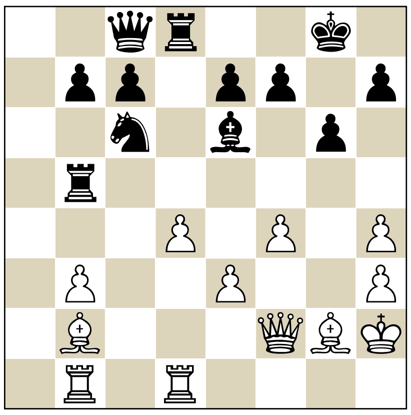


23...♖b5

Winning a pawn. But now White's central strategy is crowned with complete triumph. The black position, by the way, was almost indefensible by now anyway, as witness:

– 23...♕d7 24.e4 ♖xd4 25.♗xd4 ♘xd4 26.b4, and Black no longer has an adequate defence, since maintaining his foothold on d4 will be well-nigh impossible;

– 23...f5 24.h5, and now Malcolm Pein suggests 24...♗f7, followed by 25...♕e6. It seems to me that White can then capture the rook without any danger. After 25.♗xd5, followed by 26.♖g1, he will be an exchange up, in addition to excellent attacking chances.



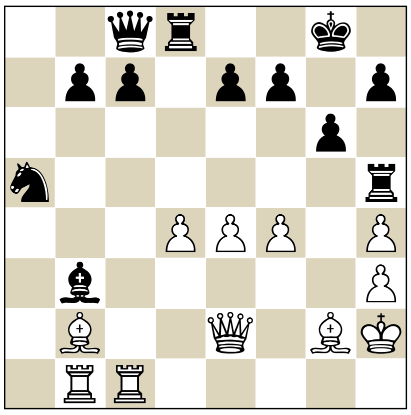
24.♕e2!

An accurate move. White wanted to avoid the complications after 24.e4 ♗xb3.

24...♖h5 25.e4 ♗xb3 26.♖dc1

Black is lost.

26...♘a5



27.d5 b6 28.♗e5 c5

Desperation.

29.dxc6

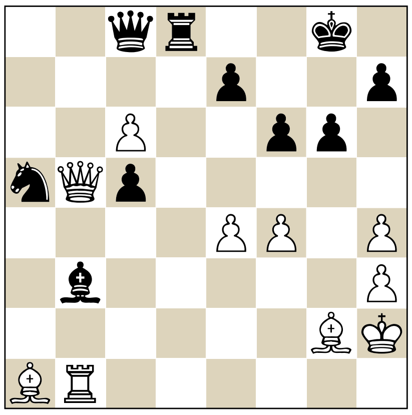
An automatic reaction. 29.♕b5 would also have been more than adequate.

29...f6 30.♗a1

The most convincing way.

30...♖c5 31.♖xc5 bxc5 32.♕b5

Even stronger was 32.e5 first. Now Black could have thrashed around for a bit longer.



32...♕c7

In time-trouble Grischuk immediately succumbs. He should still have tried 32...♗a2 33.♖b2 ♕c7, since this prevents White from taking on a2, although White still wins with 34.e5. 34...♗e6 is simply met by 35.♕b6, and after the queen swap Black has nothing left to hope for.

33.♖xb3

With the point that 33...♕xf4+ is met by 34.♖g3.

33...♘xc6 34.e5 ♘d4 35.♕c4+

Black resigned.

■ ■ ■

Alexander Grischuk congratulated the first winner of the Candidates' cycle: 'I can say that it's in no way shameful to lose a game like today's – Boris played fantastically! The only thing was that I made a blunder in the opening – perhaps I forgot what I was supposed to do on 13.b3, but I don't think we looked at that move. After it I immediately realized that Black had a very unpleasant position. Black had actively positioned his pieces, but from then on there was nowhere for him to display activeness, and if you were to blow on them the position would disintegrate. I'm happy that I found the manoeuvre ♖a5-h5, but I overestimated my chances and at a certain point I offered a draw – evidently already in a lost position. It's a little embarrassing, but I just didn't realize that. I think this was a super-game from White's point of view, and I congratulate Boris with all my heart!' – with those words Alexander shook his opponent's hand.

I've never seen Gelfand smiling and joking as much as he did after that win. One of his jokes was really liked by everyone: 'Anand's dream has come true – he'll be the youngest player in a World Championship match again!' ■

вон Аронян
Александр Грищ
Шахрияр Мамедьяров
Веселин Топалов
Владимир Кра

VLADIMIR BARSKY

A tired but immensely satisfied G-team: Pavel Eljanov, Maxim Rodshtein, Boris Gelfand and Alexander Khuzman.

АТЧИ
ИДЕНТО
Е 2011
СБ

Boris Gelfand: Deserving and Worthy

After three weeks of suspense and mounting pressure Boris Gelfand became the challenger for the crown. **Mark Glukhovsky**, editor-in-chief of the Russian magazine ‘64’ profiles the Israeli grandmaster. The author apologizes to the reader in advance – Gelfand is a good friend of his and this profile is unlikely to be unbiased and objective.

We first met exactly 10 years ago, in May 2001, at the super-tournament in Astana, which I was covering as a correspondent for the best chess website at the time, KasparovChess. Boris took third place in the tournament, behind Kasparov and Kramnik, and he was far from the main newsmaker. The main thing then was the dramatic victory of Kasparov, who in the last round was able (for the first time after London!) to break through Kramnik's Berlin endgame and capture first place. I only talked to Gelfand on the plane on the way back. I don't remember what exactly we discussed, but I remember my impression from the interview very well: this was a rare combination of amiability and genuine merit. Later I became convinced that my first impression was the right one. Moreover, now I can clarify and add to it – Boris's amiability is a legacy not only of a good upbringing, but also a firm, solid, developed (but not hypertrophied) sense of his own worth.

One of our best writers (and one of Gelfand's favourite authors), Fazil Iskander, said more than once that a person has to connect his life with something solid. Leo Tolstoy also adhered to the same opinion. It doesn't matter whether this is peasant labour or, for example, writing – the main thing is that this labour can involve a person fully and for a long time, preferably for his whole life. Gelfand has been lucky – he realized early on what exactly his life was connected with. And now for almost 30 years, without any detours, he has been travelling on the path of the chess professional, which to many people seems hard and unpromising, but continues to bring him creative satisfaction, sporting successes and material prosperity.

Boris Gelfand was born into an intellectual Jewish family in Minsk in 1968. At the age of four his father Abram introduced him to chess – the main hobby of the Soviet intelligentsia. The great book by Averbakh and Beilin *Journey in the Chess Kingdom* was virtually the best Soviet textbook, a whole generation of great players grew up on it. Gelfand was one of them. A classic wunderkind, he demonstrated outstanding abilities very early, and the whole system of raising chess players that existed in the Soviet Union worked for him. He briskly passed through the sieve of regional and selection tournaments, and played in and won championships of his city and regional and national junior tournaments.

'In our generation there were three geniuses – Gelfand, Ivanchuk and Dreev,' Alexander Khalifman recalls. 'Bareev and I were rated slightly lower – as capable talents.' We can add to those names Shirov and Kramnik, born later – and we'll understand in what company Boris's talent grew and matured. Once he finished school he knew for sure that chess was his life, his calling, his profession. His first successes came very quickly, and were so brilliant that it seemed that if a world champion wasn't emerging, then a challenger definitely was.

Alexander Khalifman: 'In our generation there were three geniuses: Gelfand, Ivanchuk and Dreev.'

In 1987 Gelfand won the European Under-20 Championship, half a point ahead of Ivanchuk, who beat him in their individual encounter. The following year he shared first place at the Under-20 World Championship in Adelaide, again at the European Junior Championship and at a strong grandmaster tournament in Vilnius. In 1989 he was already playing in the Soviet Championship, and not just playing, but taking third place and receiving a special prize from the magazine *64*. In the same year he won the GMA qualifying tournament in Palma de Mallorca – and with that came international recognition and fame. In 1990 he took second place in the super-tournament in Linares, half a point behind Kasparov. Then he won an Interzonal (Manila), and then an Olympiad on the USSR team. Within a few years he had turned from a talented schoolboy into one of the world's strongest grandmasters.

Not enough space in the magazine has been allocated to me to enumerate all his tournament and match achievements, and that isn't necessary either. Tilburg, Dos Hermanas, Wijk aan Zee, Cannes, Cap d'Agde, Biel – the names of these towns speak for themselves. Gelfand himself was particularly proud of his wins in 1992 in Moscow, at the very strong Alekhine Memorial, in his second Interzonal in Biel (1993), in the Investbanka super-tournament in Belgrade (1995), and at the two Rubinstein Memorials (1998 and 2000).

Like many major sportsmen there's a special trophy room in the basement of his house in Rishon-Le-Zion, in which his cups, medals and other awards are stored. Since the mid-nineties additions to the collection have slowed down somewhat. Another 15 years passed, and when many of his peers had either stopped playing or dropped several steps lower, his biggest successes came to him – after the age of 40! Two years ago Boris Gelfand won the World Cup in Khanty-Mansiysk. In May 2011 he won the Candidates' matches in Kazan and will play a match for the World Championship against Vishy Anand.

'I always had a lot of respect for the title of champion!' Boris says. 'When the cycle basically collapsed in the mid-nineties, morale-wise it became more difficult for me to hold training sessions, to fully prepare for tournaments. I didn't have enough motivation! As soon as the normal cycle was revived my results improved – in Mexico in 2007 I shared second place with Kramnik, then I won in Khanty-Mansiysk, and now in Kazan.'

He won – I add myself – deservedly and convincingly: he got past two of his opponents, Mamedyarov and Grischuk, in normal time, and two incredibly beautiful wins out of just three decisive games in the competition belonged to him. It was symbolic that for the Candidates' matches Gelfand unsheathed an old weapon – the Najdorf Variation, which had served him faithfully and truly for the entire first half of his career. For many years Boris was 'expert No.2' in the Najdorf after Kasparov, and his superb victory over Mamedyarov was the result of a very deep understanding of the position that arose.

His win against Grischuk was also achieved in the style of the 'nineties Gelfand', when Boris was virtually the chief specialist as White in the Grünfeld Defence. The variation with an early 8.♖b1 could certainly be named after him; then again, when the subject comes up, Boris points out that the work of his old friend Khalifman has been no less valuable. The variation with 8.♖b1 has now ceased to be relevant, but the game with Grischuk developed according to a traditional scenario for Gelfand – he managed to analyse a position in a relevant variation of the Grünfeld more deeply than his opponent, demonstrate a new subtle idea, and then exploit the pluses of his position in a sharp and dynamic situation.

Gelfand is generally very strong in dynamic positions, and on more than one occasion this discovery has come as an unpleasant surprise for many young players who judge him only by his games of the past decade. Of course, for many fans the name Gelfand is associated with the hated Russian Game or the fire-proof Slav Defence (an amusing combination for a Russian Jew!), but in actual fact the 'black Gelfand' is also a sharp variation of the Najdorf, a deep Chelyabinsk, a very dangerous Meran, and even a risky 'Benoni-King's Indian'. As White Gelfand plays not only 1.d4, but also 1.♘f3 and 1.c4, but practice clearly shows that the dreary English Opening isn't his cup of tea: the main continuations in relevant variations bring him far more points.

Preparation for an event and the search for new ideas are one of the strongest aspects of his chess talent, and those who see in Gelfand a successor to the great Soviet grandmasters Lev Polugaevsky and Efim Geller are absolutely correct. By the way, watched by an 11-year-old Gelfand, Efim Geller, who was 54, won the Soviet Championship of 1979 in Minsk. Gelfand likes to recall that episode, when for the umpteenth time he's asked why he is in no hurry to concede his place at the chessboard to younger people.

'I don't see any reason why young people should play better than Ivanchuk or Anand, myself or Shirov', he often repeats. 'Chess is good for that reason, the fact that people of different generations can do battle in it. It's just that you journalists are sick of writing about us over and over, so you're waiting for new heroes to chase us off the scene. But where is the young hooligan who can wipe us off the face of the earth? I don't see anyone like that yet!' In recent years Gelfand has often had to answer journalists' questions. Often he does this without any pleasure, especially when after major successes he starts being attacked by representatives of the non-chess media in Israel.

In the country that Boris moved to in 1998 chess isn't considered any kind of professional activity. Objectively speaking, Gelfand is the only world-class sportsman in Israel, the best out of all the sports, but he not only doesn't have a single advertising contract, but also not even the most symbolic assistance. In the last two years since he won the World Cup nothing has changed, except that he has begun to be recognized on the street more often. The only state structure that maintains a continued interest in him is the tax police.

The Israel Chess Federation, like the majority of chess federations in the world, is weak and unprofessional. Gelfand pays out of his own pocket for his coaches and seconds, endless training sessions and preparation for tournaments. 'I'm probably the only Candidate who wasn't helped at all by his federation!' he says, although without complaining or getting angry – on the contrary, with humour and very calmly. An extremely independent man, accustomed to making decisions for himself and answering for them personally, he doesn't expect anything good from bureaucrats and only hopes that they will leave him in peace.

'The service of the Muses tolerates no vanity!' the great Russian genius Pushkin wrote, and the service of Caissa is no different in that respect. I remind him about the need to 'shine' in the non-chess media and on television – as this will help to popularize chess. 'I agree!' he laughs, 'but they always ask me three questions – how much did you make, how do you feel now and what's your job. True, after Khanty-Mansiysk a fourth question appeared – how did you stand it for a whole month, it's inhumanly cold there! I'll always talk with anyone who is capable of going beyond the bounds of those idiotic questions. But a journalist has to at least take on the work of checking the Internet to find out what chess is!'

Lack of respect for chess is one of the few things that can make Gelfand angry. He was never a friend of Garry Kasparov's, but he always admired him as one of the greatest players in history. After Kasparov gave up playing he started appearing in Gelfand's comments almost more often than when he was the chess king. It was clear that Boris couldn't forgive him, not for his political views – rather, they were in agreement on many things, Gelfand is also an inveterate right-winger, he prefers George Bush over Clinton or Obama – but because he gave up the great and noble game for a depraved activity like politics. Thinking about chess, loving chess, studying chess, arguing about chess and playing chess are as natural for Gelfand as singing is for a nightingale or lying for a politician.

How many hours a day does he work? The usually laconic Gelfand doesn't reply immediately to that seemingly simple question, first asking a few clarifying questions. When I'm looking at other people's games online – does that count? What about when I'm going for a walk but thinking about a variation? Or when I'm chatting with a colleague about a rook endgame, for example? And when I'm reading a new book? It all counts, not only opening analysis with my assistants and the computer? Well, if it all counts – then that comes to about 10 hours a day!

His unique loyalty to chess is the reason for the moral authority that Boris enjoys in the chess world. People listen to him because he is guided not by his own immediate advantage, but by his understanding of fairness and the general interests of chess. He has defended classical chess for so long and so consistently that many people have decided he must be a little afraid of speed chess. In actual fact he plays speed chess even more strongly than normal chess – Gelfand's opponents in Khanty-Mansiysk were able to convince themselves of that. At rapid chess statistically he is only behind Anand – I won't give a long list of his achievements, in order to save space in the magazine. The space I've been given is coming to an end, and I haven't even said half of what I wanted to. That isn't surprising, because our relations exist on different levels: it's not just 'grandmaster-journalist'.

As a journalist I can say that Gelfand has respect for our strange tribe. He likes to read about chess, and he's always ready to say a few nice words for a person, if he deserves them. True, if a journalist blurts out something stupid he won't restrain himself – he just doesn't consider it necessary. He's the ideal newsmaker – always ready to answer a question, to talk about what happened in a game, to explain his position. The only thing he can't stand is deliberate meanness. In that case he might not give the time of day to a journalist, he has a good and long memory.

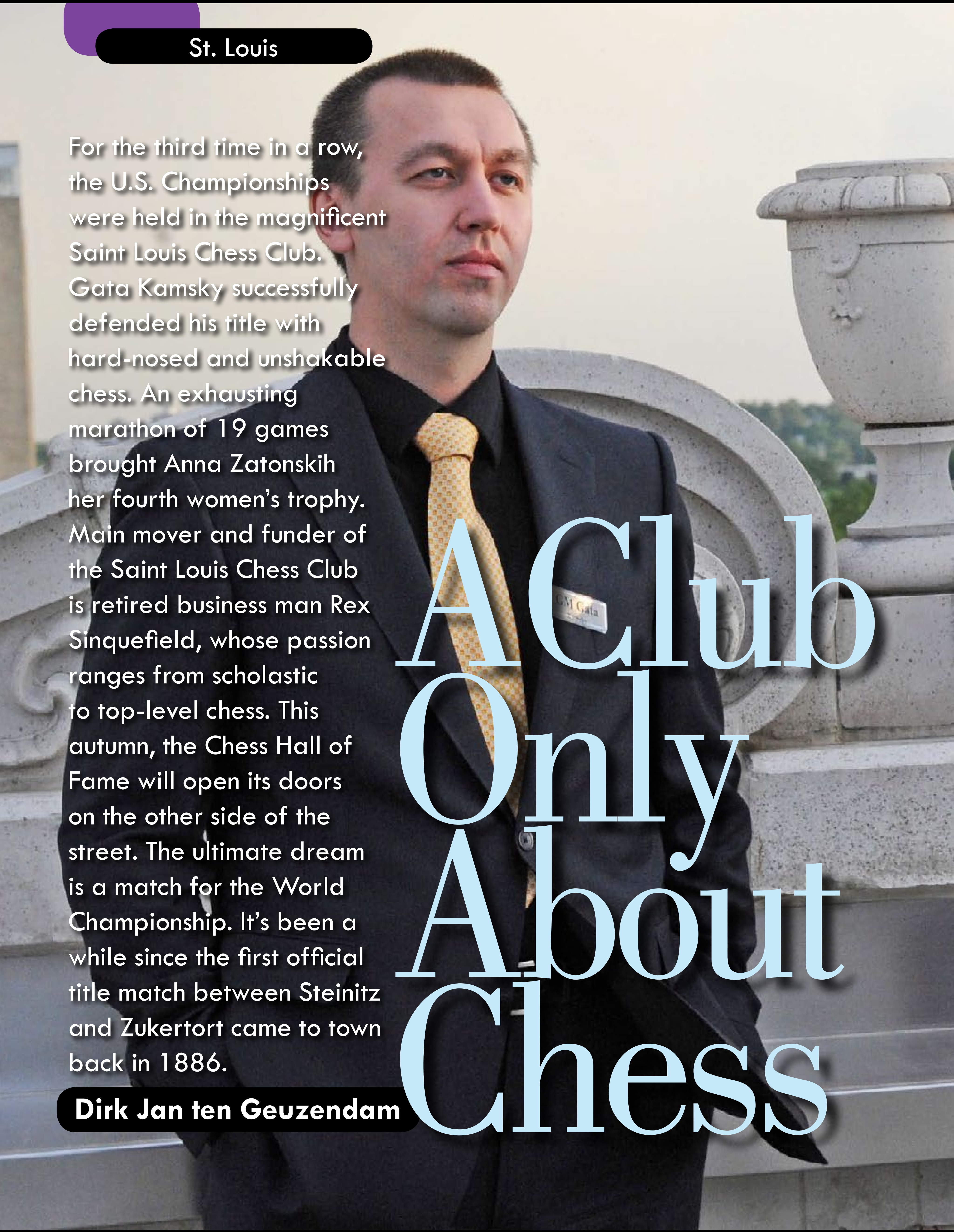
His unique loyalty to chess is the reason for the moral authority that Boris enjoys in the chess world.

As captain of the team on which Boris has played for the past few years (two-time Russian champions the Moscow club ShSM-64), I can say that he is a superb team player. He himself virtually never loses, and at the same time he's always ready to help his colleagues (he has enormous experience and opening erudition), and is always in a good mood. He holds first board like a man of steel. The gatherings each evening with his participation are enjoyable – Boris is a big fan of funny chess stories, he himself knows a multitude of them that have accumulated over his career. He subtly senses the condition and mood of the other players, and in arguments or difficult issues his word is often the deciding one.

As a friend I can say that he likes to read, mainly good Russian prose. He respects poetry, although only a few authors, and he isn't trying to increase their numbers. At a convenient moment he can quote Brodsky. He's less interested in music, seeing it as entertainment – harmless, though. I think because he can simultaneously listen to music and work on chess. He thinks film is harmful entertainment – he doesn't watch at all, considering it an empty waste of time. Accounts on social networks, Twitter and Facebook and other balderdash, he similarly considers an empty waste of time. He completely fills his own quota of empty time-wasting, which everyone has, with his fanatical love of football. Gelfand is a member of the Barcelona fan club, he watches all their matches, and travels to some of them if he has the chance. (Immediately after his win in Kazan, for example, he went to London for the final of the Champions League against Manchester United. Barca didn't mess up – 3-1.) Football could certainly take second place in his life. If he didn't have a family.

He has a wonderful wife, Maya, who not only loves and understands him, but also shields him from all the day-to-day aspects of life. (And, by the way, cooks superbly.) And also bears him children. His adorable little daughter is six years old, and she'll start school in September. His long-awaited son is two months old. Boris doesn't have many family duties – can it be any other way with a sportsman of his level? But his main duty – loving his family wholeheartedly – Boris fulfils devoutly and completely. As is his habit – he devoutly and completely serves his profession at the chessboard.

The main sadness in his life is that his first teacher and most devoted fan, his father, didn't live to see his most important victories. His main joy is that his family line will continue. In the World Championship match that will take place next year two not-so-young men and two new fathers will meet. What are Boris Gelfand's chances of beating Vishy Anand? We'll talk about that next time. Undoubtedly there will be a reason to. ■



A Club Only About Chess

For the third time in a row, the U.S. Championships were held in the magnificent Saint Louis Chess Club. Gata Kamsky successfully defended his title with hard-nosed and unshakable chess. An exhausting marathon of 19 games brought Anna Zatonskih her fourth women's trophy. Main mover and funder of the Saint Louis Chess Club is retired business man Rex Sinquefield, whose passion ranges from scholastic to top-level chess. This autumn, the Chess Hall of Fame will open its doors on the other side of the street. The ultimate dream is a match for the World Championship. It's been a while since the first official title match between Steinitz and Zukertort came to town back in 1886.

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam

IM Anna
Zatonskih

2011 U.S. Champions Gata Kamsky and Anna Zatonskih photographed on the roof of the Chase Park Plaza Hotel in St. Louis.

PHOTOS NEW IN CHESS

Director Tony Rich on the doorstep of the Saint Louis Chess Club.

A perfect place for an offhand game.

The Board Room.

Stars of today and yesteryear watch the action on the first floor.

'You mean, there is a magazine that is only about chess??' The customs officer at Detroit Metro Airport, a young lady in her mid-twenties, could barely suppress her surprise and amusement. These Europeans can really be funny. As for me, I could barely suppress my anger about my stupidity. In a silly form of honesty I had ticked 'yes' on the customs form behind the question if I had any commercial merchandise with me, as I didn't know how else to qualify the 15 complimentary copies of New In Chess that I had in my suitcase to hand out at the U.S. Championship in St. Louis.

Instead of being praised for my honesty I was whisked off to a room where a dozen of Asian and African visitors were waiting to explain why they wanted to enter the country. The customs officer was clearly at a loss what to do with me. She knew that chess existed, as a pastime, and, to her further slight surprise, had found the websites of both New In Chess and the U.S. Championships. I wasn't making these things up. But what did that say about my status as a visitor? As she struggled with the question and stared at the computer in front of her, a colleague standing next to her whispered behind his hand to let the matter rest. It was not worth the trouble. And when she kept searching files in her computer, he told her with more insistence that this made no sense. He tried to make it clear to her that I was not going to report on a sport, that is a real sport like tennis or baseball. This was, well, he didn't know what this was, but she could save herself the trouble.

Fortunately, his male advice didn't make her stubborn, and with a sigh she looked at me again. 'OK, I'll get you out of here in a minute', she said, took a red pencil and put a big cross on my form. And off I went, well in time to catch the connecting flight to St. Louis.

Clearly, for many U.S. citizens chess is an exotic pastime that doesn't sound too appealing. On the other hand, it would be silly to boast its non-existence on the other side of the Pond. Two of the greatest champions of all time, Paul Morphy and Bobby Fischer, were Americans, and the various matches that Garry Kasparov played in the States attracted a lot of attention. The U.S. remains a serious chess force. At the Olympiads in 2006 and 2008, the American team won the bronze medals, and with Hikaru Nakamura they currently have a Top-10 player who has set his sights on the highest a chess player can achieve.

> At the start of the round the kitchen staff would set up a warm and cold buffet outside the commentary room, where everyone could serve themselves!

Not surprisingly, last year Nakamura moved to St. Louis, the new epicentre of American chess. At the heart of the chess scene here is the Saint Louis Chess Club and Scholastic Center, which opened its doors in 2008 and is easily one of the finest and most impressive chess clubs I have ever seen. The club is situated on Maryland Avenue in an upmarket residential area with trendy shops and restaurants. Only hours after my brush with the U.S. customs officer in Detroit, I drink in the class of the club as Tony Rich, the club's director, gives me a brief tour. Tony has his office on the ground floor, at the back of a spacious area where members can buy books or chess merchandise and play casual games while watching the games of the championship on television screens. The main rooms are on the first floor, where the men's and the women's championship are taking place in two long, brightly lit interconnected rooms. On all walls there are countless framed pictures of chess heroes of today and yesteryear, and like everywhere else (I'm even tempted to include a neatly ordered pile of magazines in the men's toilet, mainly American weeklies with a number of New In Chess issues on top) everything is done with great taste. The construction and design of the club was overseen by Board member Susan Barrett, who is also Director of Art and Culture for Rex and Jeanne Sinquefield (and manages their rapidly expanding collection of American Regionalism paintings), and this shows everywhere. It certainly shows in the Board Room, which serves as VIP-room during events and has the quiet and luxurious atmosphere of a reading room in a gentlemen's club. The room mixes old and new styles. There's a fireplace with comfortable chairs and sofas, while on the wall your eyes are drawn to flat-panel displays of video art created by Diana Thater, one of the leading video artists in the States. Still, the very best reason to go to the Board Room, where obviously the games could be followed as well, was the endless stream of gourmet snacks that the kitchen staff kept carrying in all through the afternoon. The club has its own kitchen for opening nights and other functions, and the culinary level is truly astounding. Interestingly, not only the guests can eat at the club, but the visitors to the tournament were also served every day, a truly unique and generous service. At the start of the round the kitchen staff would set up a warm and cold buffet outside the commentary room in the basement, where everyone could serve themselves! Needless

SAINT LOUIS CHESS CLUB

Rex Sinquefield with defending women's champion Irina Krush.

NEW IN CHESS

Video art by Diana Thater in the Board Room.

2011
U.S. CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP

NEW IN CHESS

Hikaru Nakamura tells Ben Finegold and Yasser Seirawan what he thinks of the position.

ESS CLUB
SCHOLASTIC CENTER
2011 U.S.
WOMEN'S
CHAMPIONSHIP
-28, 2011
2011 WOMEN'S
2011 WOMEN'S

NEW IN CHESS

Commentators Maurice Ashley and Jennifer Shahade.

to say, these buffets were very popular. During the play the basement was the busiest part of the club, as it was here that Maurice Ashley and Jennifer Shahade commented on the games and interviewed the players in front of both a limited live and a considerable Internet audience.

Probably the most loyal spectator, seated in the front row whenever he had the time, was Rex Sinquefield, who not only believes that chess is a useful pastime for kids, but first and foremost has a true passion for the game itself. As he told me, his fascination with chess arose when, as a kid, he saw people playing chess in movies. Unfortunately for him, there was no one around at the time to teach him the game. He had to wait till he was 13, when his uncle Fred taught him, and he has always felt guilty that he already beat him in the second game. From that moment on, he was hooked. He played on the high school chess team and after graduate school at the University of Chicago he started playing tournaments. This he did from 1973 through 1985, when he and his business partner moved their business to Santa Monica, Los Angeles. With a heavy travelling schedule, two kids and a third on the way, chess was bound to take a back seat and this was indeed what happened. In 1985 he told his wife that he was going to put chess on hold, but also warned her that some day he was going to come back to it. This he recounts with a grin and a sparkle in his eyes, and both are fully justified. Looking at what he has achieved in the past few years after his return to St. Louis in 2006, his comeback is easily one of the most impressive ones in chess history. And it seems there is much more to come. 'Rex is competitive', I heard Maurice Ashley say, and those words kept ringing in my ears during the days I spent in St. Louis. He is thinking of staging a big international tournament and, who knows, perhaps one day the World Championship Match. The next landmark is the opening, in September, of the Chess Hall of Fame in a house he has bought opposite the chess club. Instead of the 7,000 square feet that the Hall of Fame had at its disposal in Miami, they will now have 15,000 square feet. The emphasis will be on chess-related art, and the project will be an essential part of the outreach program, especially for children. Among the contemporary art that Sinquefield has acquired for the collection are one of the three chess tables called *Play It By Trust* by Yoko Ono and a table and pieces by Man Ray. Last year he also bought books and other belongings that Bobby Fischer had in a storage in Pasadena when they were auctioned off. It doesn't come as a big surprise either that he was the secret bidder who recently bought the board and pieces (signed by both players) that Fischer and Spassky used when they played the third game of their 1972 match in Reykjavik in a backroom, for the steep price of $67,500 ($76,275 including the buyer's premium). At the same auction he also bought three Fischer letters for close to $10,000.

As a consequence of this year's format, most of the 16 participants had already left St. Louis when I arrived. The championship started with two all-play-all groups of eight players, with the two top-finishers qualifying for the knock-out play-offs. The first group was won by defending champion Gata Kamsky, who was clearly the strongest. Only in his game against Stripunsky did he get into trouble and was even lost at one point, but for the rest it was plain sailing. Most of Kamsky's games had his hallmark solidity and tenaciousness, with the exception of his flashy win against Akobian. Second place in this group was taken by the only other player to go undefeated, Yury Shulman.

Sometimes one got the idea that Kamsky's win in the championship was almost inevitable, given his extreme stubbornness in defence and his immense patience in equal or slightly better positions to seek his chances. Particularly in the absence of America's highest rated player, Hikaru Nakamura, it was hard to see who was going to threaten Kamsky.

Nakamura's absence as a participant was obviously regrettable, but one got the impression that the organizers respected his decision that the championship didn't fit into his program. As he was present at the club almost every day, it was easy to understand his mixed feelings. 'The start of the tournament was very weird, especially as I live here in St Louis. It's very strange if there is a top event going on in which you could be competing and you're not.' His regrets started to disappear in the course of the event, as he was not impressed by the quality of the play. He made no bones about criticising the participants. Take this highly remarkable tweet on Twitter: 'Sometimes it would be nice if players in the U.S. Championships would take the tournament seriously instead of being out late every night...' Nor was he impressed by Kamsky's play, who, as he put it, only 'played well enough to beat the players who are here.' (Funnily enough, when Nakamura was talking about Kamsky in an interview with Maurice Ashley, it took me some time to realize who he was talking about, as his pronunciation of 'Gata' was very close to that of 'God'.)

And when he was confronted by Kamsky's ironically intended statement at the final press conference that he is now the strongest player in the United States, Nakamura said: 'Frankly, I don't particularly care about what he thinks about me. I've to do what I have to do, I have to play well and everything takes care of itself. He's won this tournament, but especially in recent years he has not been playing the top tournaments, not playing the Anands and the Carlsens, and certainly not finishing at the top. So I don't pay too much attention to what he is saying. I'm sure there'll come a time when we will play again and I will let my play over the board speak for itself. I don't want to say too many negative things about Gata, because he just won the championship, but it's very hard to want to play against him. His style is incredibly dry, he's basically happy with a draw in every single game he plays.'

Nakamura was happier with the enterprising play of Robert Hess and Sam Shankland, the revelations of the second preliminary group. Following a brief European tour, Hess was truly on a rampage and scored an impressive 5½ out of 7, 1½ points more than runners-up Alexander Onischuk and Sam Shankland. In the ensuing tiebreak the experienced Onischuk seemed to be the clear favourite, but an unwarranted winning attempt in the second rapid game cost him dearly and promoted Grandmaster Elect Sam Shankland, as Ashley kept calling him, to the semi-finals.

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Perhaps the most remarkable name in the second group was Yasser Seirawan, the four-time U.S. Champion, who came out of retirement to give it another try. As he put it himself: 'I fell into a helpmate. In February I wrote to the organizers and congratulated them on what they were trying to do and what they had done organizing the U.S. Championship. And that I strongly applauded their efforts and looked forward to telling them that in person. And to that extent I would have liked to come as a commentator. And the reaction was, Yasser, we would like to see you in St. Louis as well, but the commentator jobs are all taken. We can offer you a position as a player!' As the preliminaries were played without a single rest day, Seirawan was afraid that he might run out of energy or that something might go wrong in the openings. In fact, barring an opening accident against Larry Christiansen, there was little to worry about, and if he had used all the chances he got, he would have easily qualified for the play-offs, which he now missed by half a point.

And so the semi-finals saw an experience vs. young talents test with the pairings Kamsky-Shankland and Shulman-Hess. Besides 16-year-old Ray Robson, who admirably finished third in Group A, Hess and Shankland are the big hopes of American chess, although both of them are also studying at university. Hess has a simple explanation for his adventurous style: 'I play chess for fun, I am not a professional. For those who are professionals, of course there is a lot of money at stake, but for me it's all pure fun.' And it doesn't seem very likely that Shankland will turn pro either, although in his case you never know. Last year he announced his retirement from chess, but then won the U.S. Junior Championship and qualified for the U.S. Championship, which is not a challenge you are going to turn down. And here, too, things went better than expected. In fact, his second during the last days, Jon-Ludvig Hammer, didn't come to St. Louis as a second at all. As an old friend of Shankland's he had decided to come for a brief vacation at a point when Shankland would surely have been knocked out of the tournament. As it went, there was no time for relaxation and his friend hired him to help him in his preparation. As for Shankland's future plans, it now seems that anything can happen: 'I am a college student currently, I plan on continuing school, but I certainly don't want to close any doors. I teach a lot of chess, that's a good income, and I try to play every summer. I am leaving my options open, I could easily see myself in six years being a full chess pro or having a nine-to-five job or any of a hundred other things.'

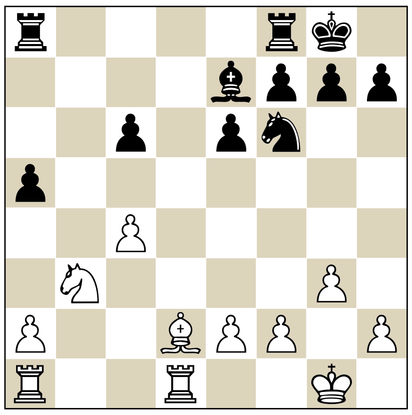
Experience triumphed in the semi-finals. Shankland gave Kamsky a good fight in the first game, which ended in a draw, but in the second game he played some moves that he qualified as 'interesting, and then interesting meaning horrible' and was mercilessly punished.

Hess was eliminated by Shulman in the rapids after both classical games ended in hard-fought draws. 'It's not the best feeling in the world', Hess described his emotions after his elimination. In fact he was so disappointed that he could barely motivate himself for the fight for third place against Shankland: 'It's tough to be eliminated in a rapid game. It's a tough feeling not to lose a single game in classical chess and yet end up fourth out of the final four. After losing to Yury (Shulman) I had 6½ out of 9, a fantastic result. At that point Gata (Kamsky) had the same number of points, so it's not such a great feeling when you have so many points and you're eliminated from the competition.'

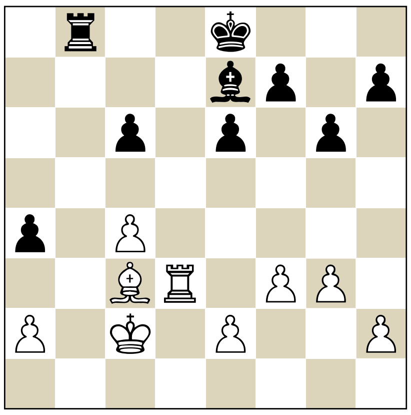
The final between Kamsky and Shulman was a bit of an anti-climax. The first game was vintage Kamsky. Nothing much was happening, and after 25 moves the commentators were expecting a draw 'in five more moves'. But Kamsky just kept on playing, Shulman began to commit inaccuracies and after 57 moves he could resign. Or as Kamsky summed up the game: 'I gave him enough choices, he ended up in time-trouble and he self-destructed.'

CA 3.7 – E04
Gata Kamsky
Yury Shulman
St. Louis 2011 (2.1)

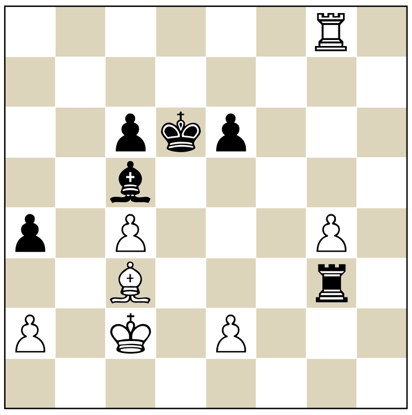
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.g3 dxc4 5.♗g2 c5 6.0-0 ♘c6 7.dxc5 ♕xd1 8.♖xd1 ♗xc5 9.♘bd2 c3 10.bxc3 0-0 11.♘b3 ♗e7 12.♘fd4 ♗d7 13.♘xc6 ♗xc6 14.♗xc6 bxc6 15.c4 a5 16.♗d2



This was all preparation by Kamsky and his second Andrey Volokitin. Here they looked at 16...♗b4. **16...a4 17.♘a5** Kamsky had to figure out where to put his knight and decided that the reason he played 16.♗d2 was to put the knight on a5. So that's what he did. **17...♖a6 18.♖ab1 ♖fa8 19.♘b7 ♔f8 20.♗e3** If White goes 20.♗b4, Black has 20...♖b8. **20...♘e4 21.♖d3 ♖b8 22.♗f4** The only move to keep some play. **22...♖ba8** After 22...♖aa8 Kamsky had to see 23.♗xb8 ♖xb8 24.♖b6, because now after 24...♘c5 White has 25.♘xc5 ♖xb6 26.♘d7+. **23.f3 ♘c5 24.♘xc5 ♗xc5+ 25.♔f1 ♔e8** And Black has equalized. At this point the commentators were expecting the game to last 'maybe five more moves.' **26.♗e5 g6 27.♗f6 ♖b6** Just in time. **28.♖xb6 ♗xb6 29.♔e1** And the game should end in a draw. **29...♗c5 30.♔d2 ♖b8 31.♔c2 ♗e7 32.♗c3**



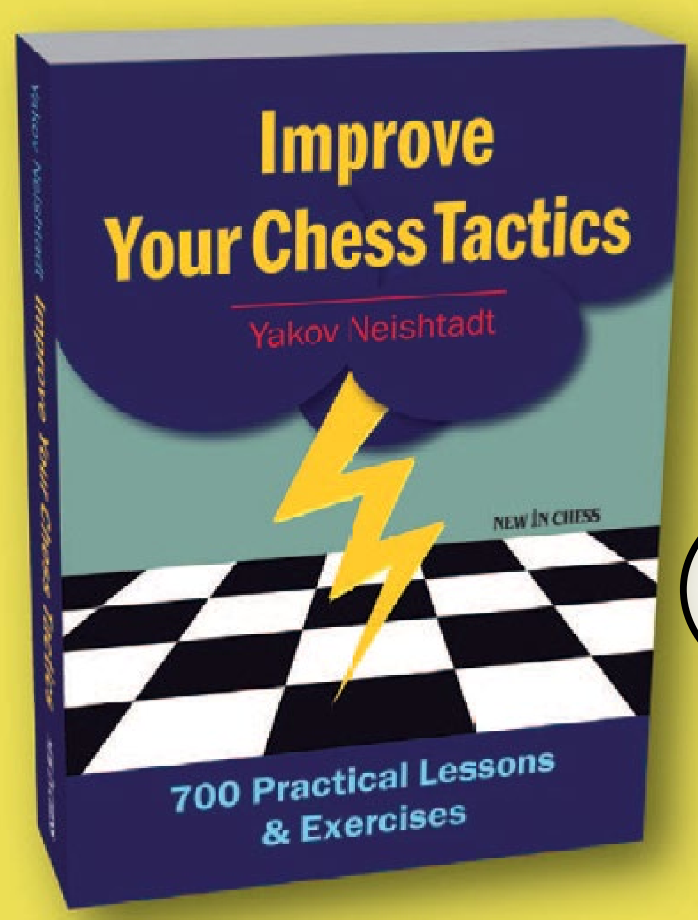
32...f5 This push gave Kamsky a glimmer of hope. More accurate was 32...♖d8 to exchange the rooks, when he planned to play 33.♖e3, but Black is completely OK. Getting some hope he thought: 'Hmm, I have a superior bishop, a better pawn structure and my king is closer to the queenside pawns.' **33.♖d1 ♗c5 34.h3 h5 35.g4** Now Black decides to take twice on g4, after which, in Kamsky's words, 'it was already unpleasant for Black'. He should have stayed put with ...♔e7-e8-e7-e8, and there is little White can do. **35...hxg4 36.hxg4 fxg4 37.fxg4 ♖d8 38.♖b1 ♔d7 39.♖b7+** Better was 39.♗e5 and Black is lost. Now he still got some chances. **39...♔d6 40.♖g7 ♖h8 41.♖xg6 ♖h2 42.♔d2 ♖h3 43.♖g8 ♖g3 44.♔c2**



44...♗e3 This allows a winning manoeuvre. Kamsky was expecting 44...♖g2, but after 45.g5 ♖xe2+ 46.♔d3 ♖xa2 47.g6 ♔e7 he believed that White was close to winning after 48.g7 ♔f7 49.♖c8 ♖g2 50.♖xc6. **45.♖d8+ ♔e7 46.♖d3** After this retreat Black is completely lost. **46...♗f4 47.♗b4+ ♔f6 48.♖xg3 ♗xg3 49.♔b2 ♔g5 50.♔a3 ♔xg4 51.♔xa4 ♗f2 52.c5 ♔f4 53.♔a5 ♔e3 54.♔b6 ♔xe2 55.♔xc6 ♔d3 56.♔b5 ♔d4 57.a4 ♔d5** Black resigned.

This win proved decisive. In the second game a slip of the finger ruined all of Shulman's chances of an opening advantage and Kamsky effortlessly made a draw and brought home the bacon.

Naturally, Shulman was not happy with his loss in the final, but he still was a highly contented man, and with good reason. Second place earned him $30,000, not an amount you win in a chess tournament every day, especially if your main profession is being a coach and you only occasionally get the chance to play in an elite tournament like this U.S. Championship. And he was all smiles for a completely different reason, as during his second semi-final game against Hess, his wife had given birth to a son.



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A NEW IN CHESS PUBLICATION

On the next pages, the main actors annotate their favourite games from the championship. At the end of this selection you will find the contribution of the winner of the women's championship, Anna Zatonskih. If Kamsky's road to the title was a smooth ride with hardly a bump, Zatonskih's road to victory was a marathon of epic proportions. Whereas for Kamsky 11 games were enough to prove his superiority, Zatonskih didn't miss any chance to play tiebreaks. Finishing shared fourth and fifth in the preliminary group she needed to win the tiebreak against Sabina Foisor (which she did, 2-0) to reach the semifinals. There she needed five games to eliminate her old rival and defending champion Irina Krush (who had beaten her in the preliminary). And finally, in a final that could also have gone either way, she required another five games to take the last hurdle, her good friend Tatev Abrahamyan. Of the 19(!) games she played, Anna Zatonskih chose to annotate the Armageddon game against Irina Krush that got her into the final. An understandable choice for everyone that remembers their dramatic Armageddon blitz game in the final of the 2008 championship. If you don't, you may refresh your memory on YouTube.

NEW IN CHESS

With his win over Yury Shulman in the first game, Gata Kamsky essentially clinched the final match.

NOTES BY

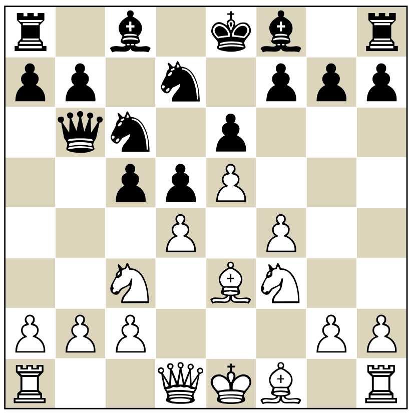
Gata Kamsky

FR 4.4 – C11
Gata Kamsky
Varuzhan Akobian
St. Louis 2011 (2)

The game against Varuzhan Akobian was very important, because he was one of my direct competitors in my group.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♗e3 ♕b6

This is what Wesley So played against me in the World Cup in 2009.



8.♕d2

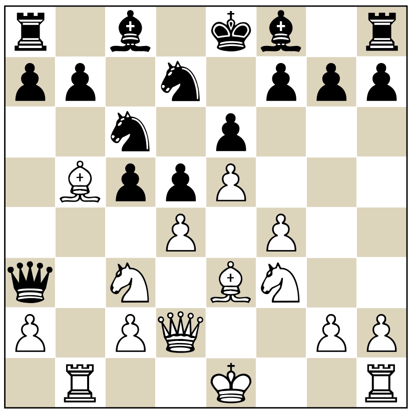
That game I lost with white after I played 8.a3, and I realized it wasn't such a bad variation for Black.

The old main line is 8.♘a4, but I thought, let's play 8.♕d2. I had looked at this after the game against So and found the variations really interesting.

8...♕xb2

Black is forced to take.

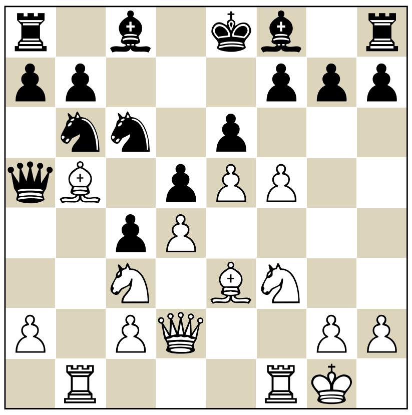
9.♖b1 ♕a3 10.♗b5



Instead of the text, 10.♘b5 is also playable. But I wanted to play the bishop, which has also been seen before, but not so often.

10...♕a5 This was the first surprise. But it's a good move and quite playable.

11.0-0 c4 This is not very consistent, I believe. **12.f5 ♘b6** He has to protect the e6-square.



13.♕e1

Much stronger was 13.f6, when he is forced to play 13...g6. I would continue the same way, with 14.♕e1, but I don't give up my f-pawn. And if he exchanges his dark-squared bishop, all the dark squares around his king would be really weak. So, pushing the f-pawn was the right plan, but I was caught up by the plan of ♕e1 and ♗d2 trying to trap his queen.

13...exf5

He has no other choice.

14.a4

St. Louis 2011 Group A														cat. XIV
					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		TPR
1	Gata Kamsky	IGM	USA	2733	*	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	5	2715
2	Yury Shulman	IGM	USA	2622	½	*	½	1	½	1	½	½	4½	2675
3	Ray Robson	IGM	USA	2522	½	½	*	1	½	½	0	1	4	2637
4	Alexander Ivanov	IGM	USA	2540	½	0	0	*	1	½	1	½	3½	2584
5	Varuzhan Akobian	IGM	USA	2611	0	½	½	0	*	½	½	1	3	2524
6	Jaan Ehlvest	IGM	USA	2586	0	0	½	½	½	*	½	1	3	2528
7	Daniel Naroditsky	FM	USA	2438	0	½	1	0	½	½	*	0	2½	2497
8	Alexander Stripunsky	IGM	USA	2578	½	½	0	½	0	0	1	*	2½	2477

St. Louis 2011 Group B														cat. XIV
					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		TPR
1	Robert Hess	IGM	USA	2565	*	½	1	½	1	1	½	1	5½	2812
2	Samuel Shankland	IM	USA	2512	½	*	½	½	0	1	½	1	4	2639
3	Alexander Onischuk	IGM	USA	2678	0	½	*	½	½	½	1	1	4	2615
4	Yasser Seirawan	IGM	USA	2636	½	½	½	*	½	½	1	0	3½	2571
5	Alexander Shabalov	IGM	USA	2590	0	1	½	½	*	0	1	0	3	2528
6	Gregory Kaidanov	IGM	USA	2569	0	0	½	½	1	*	0	1	3	2531
7	Benjamin Finegold	IGM	USA	2500	½	½	0	0	0	1	*	½	2½	2489
8	Larry Christiansen	IGM	USA	2586	0	0	0	1	1	0	½	*	2½	2477

Playoff: Shankland-Onischuk 1½-½

Semi-finals

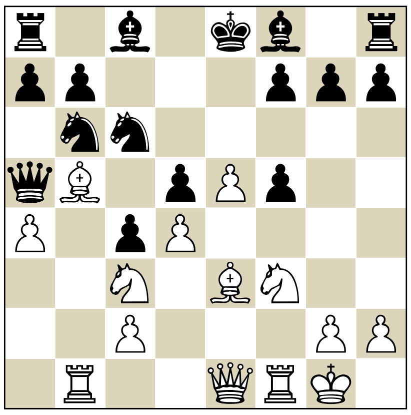
Kamsky-Shankland 1½-½
Shulman-Hess 2½-1½

Final 3rd-4th place

Shankland-Hess 2-1

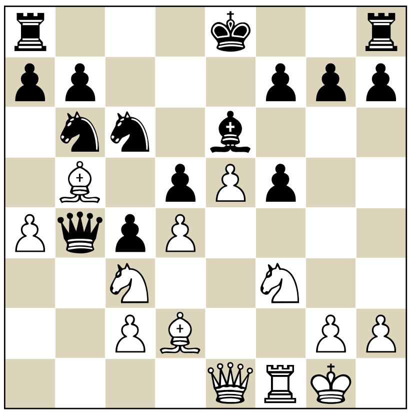
Final

Kamsky-Shulman 1½-½



Completing the entrapment of the queen. He saw my next move coming, but there is nothing really that Black can do to stop me from catching his queen.

14...♗e6 15.♗d2 ♗b4 16.♖xb4 ♕xb4



17.♘e4

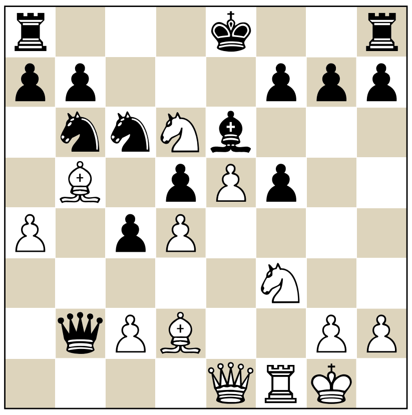
The human move, aiming to trap the queen in the centre.

I had missed the computer's suggestion, 17.a5. Now if he takes on a5, after 18.♘xd5 he doesn't have all the options he has with the queen on b4. The computer gives the line 17...0-0 18.axb6 axb6, and Black is slightly worse, but it's really unpleasant for Black.

17...♕b2

The right move. 17...♕e7 was slightly worse, because after 18.♘d6+ (18.♗b4 is also possible) Black's position is terribly cramped.

18.♘d6+

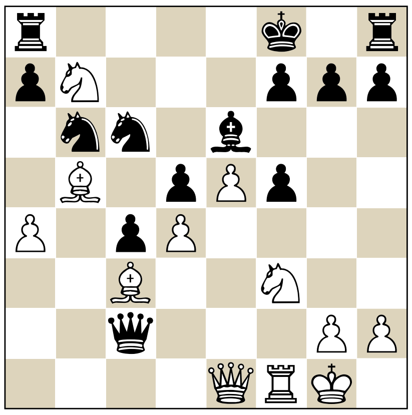


18...♔f8

Moving the king to the kingside, as it would come under a really bad attack on the queenside. I think that in this part of the game we both played very well, trying to find the only moves. Defending is tough; for me it's much easier.

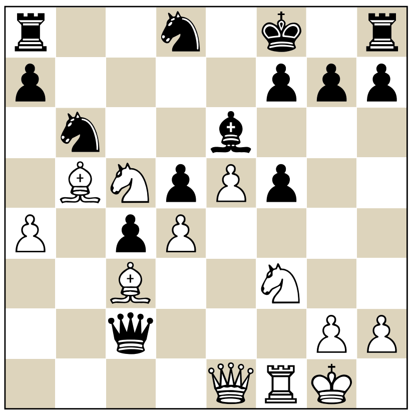
19.♗c3 ♕xc2 20.♘xb7

The right thing to do. The knight aims for c5, where it will take away some essential squares from the queen. And, of course, now the knight on c6 is hanging too. Now he made a mistake.



20...♘xa4

The move to be played was 20...♘d8. But still White is superior. The computer doesn't show this immediately, but after putting it on some depth it realizes that Black's position is really dangerous after 21.♘c5. Now what to do? There are two moves:

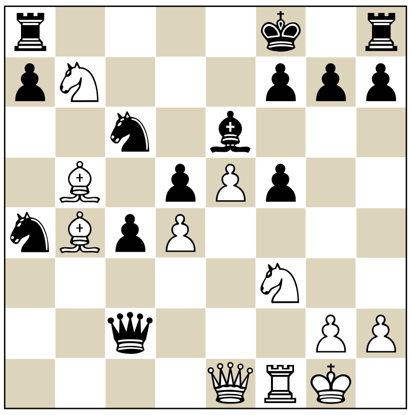


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 21...a6 22.♖f2 ♕xf2+ 23.♔xf2 axb5 24.axb5 ♖a2+ 25.♔g1 ♔e8 26.♗a5 ♘d7 27.♘a6, with the strong threat of ♘c7+, when Black has to play something ridiculous like 27...♘f8 and White is just better. He plays ♗b4, ♕b1, ♘c5, and the pawn is really pushing fast.

B) The other variation is 21...f4, when White has a lot of options, for instance 22.a5 a6 23.♗b4 ♔g8 24.♗e8 (that was the purpose of ♗b4, to secure this square) 24...♘c8 25.♕h4 ♘a7, and now after the simple 26.♘g5, quite surprisingly, White is practically winning. There are so many pieces hitting the black king, and the defender on e6 that holds the position together is about to fall, after which Black is basically lost.

21.♗b4+ Now Black is in trouble.



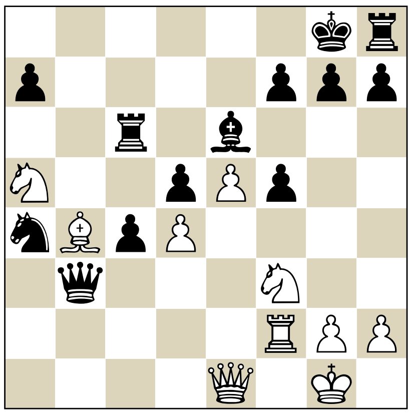
21...♔g8

If he plays 21...♘xb4 22.♕xb4+ ♔g8 23.♗xa4, White continues ♘c5, eliminates the bishop on e6, puts the bishop on d7 and gets all those pawns.

22.♗xc6 ♖c8 23.♖f2 Only one square to go for the black queen, as it has to protect the knight on a4.

23...♕b3 24.♘a5 ♖xc6

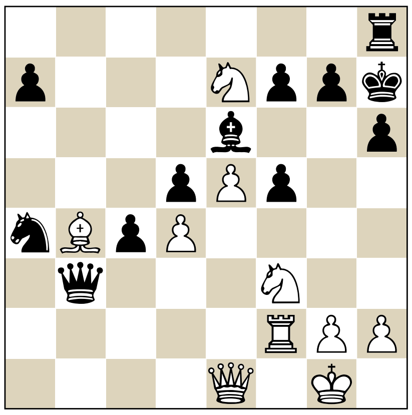
And now, faced with a completely winning position, I was a bit perplexed. What to do? I can take the queen and I can take the rook.



25.♘xc6 And I took the rook. The normal line would have been 25.♘xb3 cxb3 26.♗a3, when the queen goes to b4, and White is completely winning.

25...h6 26.♘e7+ I could still play something like 26.♘d2 or 26.♕a1, going after his queen, but I figured there must be something completely winning. And of course I was wrong.

26...♔h7

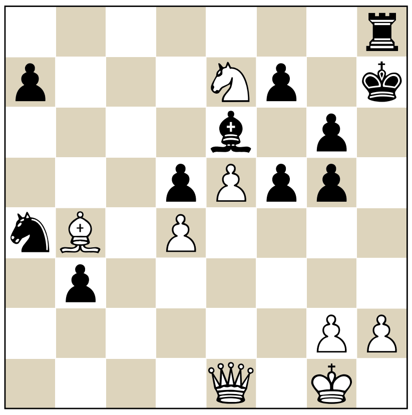


27.♘g5+ hxg5 28.♖f3

This was the idea. I trap his queen, because it cannot move in view of the threat ♖h3 mate. But he found the right move:

28...g6 29.♖xb3 cxb3

But now I suddenly wondered: what to do? Because his b-pawn is really strong, and actually there is not much I can do. I lost the thread of the game and Black was back in business.

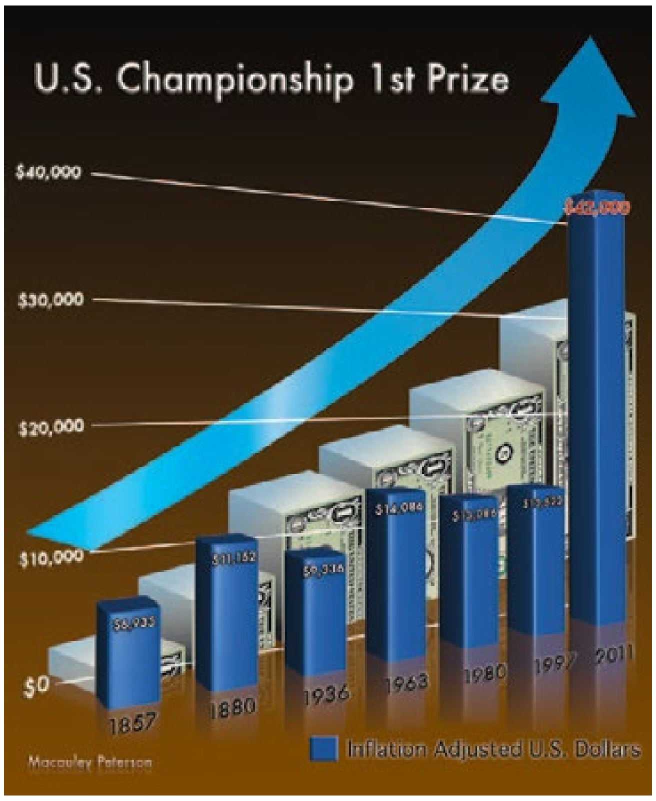


Money from Morphy to Kamsky

A lot has changed in American chess over the past century and a half. But up until this year, the prize for the winner (adjusted for inflation) has increased only modestly. At the First American Congress in 1857, Paul Morphy's first prize was $300, or around $7,000 in today's dollars. One hundred and fifty years later in 2007, Alexander Shabalov took home $12,000. It wasn't until 2009, when the tournament moved to St. Louis, that the Champion's haul hit $30,000 for the first time. Gata Kamsky's repeat victory in 2011 breaks them all by a wide margin. Of course, with base prize money for the premiere U.S. tournaments in tennis and golf running well into the *millions*, chess still has a long way to go!

Sources: Fiske, Daniel Willard. *Book of the First American Chess Congress*, 1859; McCormick, Gene H. and Andy Soltis. *History of the U.S. Chess Championship*, 2006; U.S. Chess Federation, www.USChess.org.

Macauley Peterson



NEW!

Viktor Bologan: The Catalan: a complete repertoire for White

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The Catalan is one of the most solid openings for White. It forms part of the large and strong fianchetto family in which White builds his strategy mainly around the bishop on g2. The current DVD covers all of Black's replies to the Catalan, some of which can even transpose to other openings such as the Tarrasch System and the Queen's Indian. The author's idea is, as it was in previous DVDs he has published in this area, to help White against all classical setups for Black. Though the DVD is aimed at players of the white pieces, it still might be useful for those who have Black so that they will better understand the coming threats. It would make little sense to mention all the strong players who include the Catalan in their repertoire. Suffice it to say that the Catalan rules!

Viktor Bologan is a pupil of the top Moldavan trainer Vecheslav Chebanenko. For many years Bologan has been the number 1 in Moldavia and has represented his country in eight chess Olympiads. His greatest successes were in 2003, when he first of all won the Aeroflot Open and then the famous Dortmund Tournament, ahead of Kramnik and Anand. The Moldovan has also extensive experience as a trainer.
Video running time: 5 hours 29 minutes.

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Adrian Mikhalchishin: Strategy University Vol 3: Positional Pawn Sacrifice

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In chess we have certain aims - coordination and the activation of one's own pieces. Sometimes we need a special little something to speed up one of these processes - a small material sacrifice, mainly a pawn or pawns. A dynamic pawn sacrifice is easy to see, as the idea is to get clear gains for the pawn. Positional pawn sacrifices are much more difficult, as their real purpose does not become clear immediately, but only during the development of the plan. There were famous masters of positional pawn sacrifices - Bronstein, Kasparov and Romanishin. Video running time: 4 hrs 15 min.

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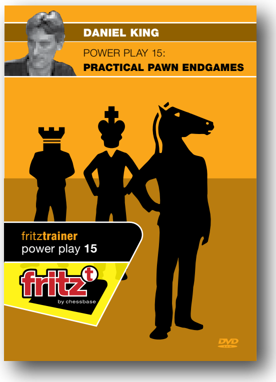
Daniel King: Power Play 15 - Practical Pawn Endgames



The aim of this DVD is to provide you with the practical skills and knowledge that you will need to play a king and pawn endgame. Based on his own playing experience, Grandmaster Daniel King reveals what is essential knowledge, saving you time in your studies. In the first section of the DVD he takes you through typical motifs and themes. In the second section he tests your knowledge with typical scenarios from actual games. The Power Play series is suitable for anyone looking to improve their chess, but also provides ready-made lessons and exercises for a trainer.
Video running time: 4 hours.

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Maurice Ashley: What Grandmasters don't see Vol. 2 – Discovered Attack

MAURICE ASHLEY
WHAT GRANDMASTERS DON'T SEE
VOL. 2: DISCOVERED ATTACK
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Many times, when a top player blunders, it is routinely described by the esoteric term "chess blindness." In this series What Grandmasters Don't See, chess trainer and world-class commentator Maurice Ashley strips away the myth, and for the first time explains why the root of these mistakes is more often based in the psychology of human learning. In this DVD, Volume 2 of the three part series, Ashley shows that no other standard tactical theme is more over-rated, overlooked and misunderstood as the Discovered Attack. In each example, Ashley illustrates how often players are confused by discovered attacks because the examples in the majority of chess books are poorly chosen to show how this important tactical idea really works in most practical games. In the first half of the DVD, Ashley uses interesting and entertaining positions to explain his points in his trademark effervescent style. The second half of the DVD is filled with examples to test what you have learned about discovered attacks with a series of exercises of increasing difficulty. The material is drawn both from classic and from recent games.

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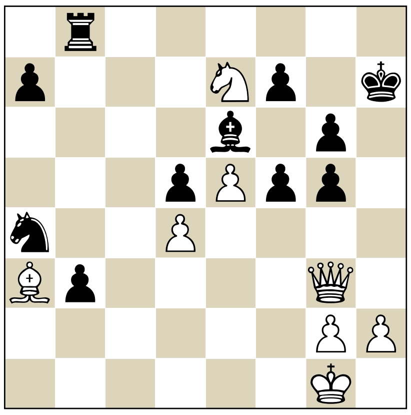
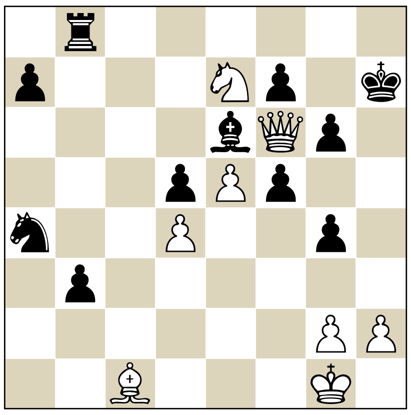
30.♗a3 After the game I showed the guys in the press-centre that if I play 30.♗d6 to take away the b8-square from the rook while the knight on e7 keeps an eye on c8, he just plays 30...b2, and after 31.♕b4 I can't really get to his pawn. But he can't do anything either, we are both tied up. So I decided to drop back the bishop, when at least I had an attack on his king.
30...♖b8 To prevent ♕b4. **31.♕g3**



31...g4 This loses on the spot. He could have drawn with 31...b2 32.♗xb2 ♖xb2 33.♕xg5 (I might try 33.h4 but then after 33...g4 34.h5 gxh5 35.♕h4 he still plays 35...♘c3 and he is in time for everything again. He threatens ...g3, which I cannot take because of ...♘e2+ and suddenly my king is in a mating net) 33...♖b1+ 34.♔f2 ♘c3, and suddenly Black is able to put the knight on e4, which covers everything and he is not even worse anymore.
32.♕h4+ ♔g7 33.♕f6+ ♔h7 34.♗c1

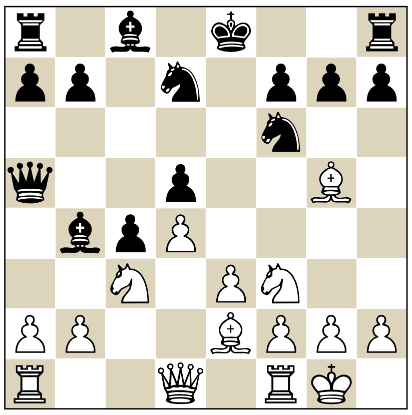


Black will be mated and so he resigned. An interesting game, the idea was strong, and so was the attack. But sometimes beauty is not the best decision.

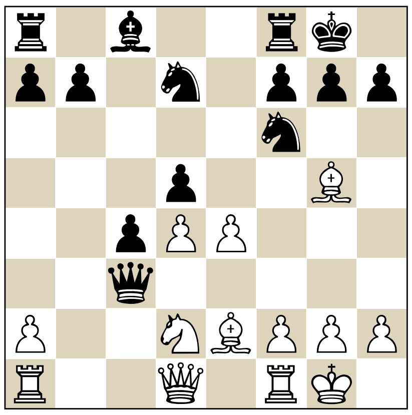
NOTES BY
Yury Shulman

NI 27.9 – D38
Yury Shulman
Jaan Ehlvest
St. Louis 2011 (3)

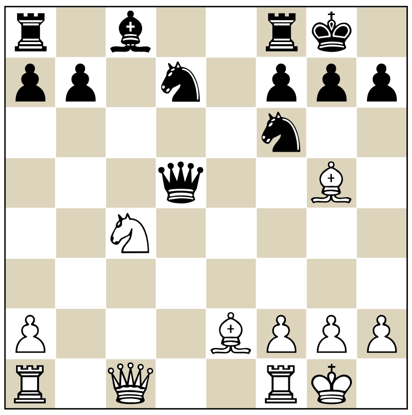
This game was played in Round 3, and since there were seven draws out of eight games in our group in the first two rounds, this round was finally to show the intentions of all the players.
I have a long history of encounters with Jaan Ehlvest which goes all the way back to 1994, when he was a Super-GM and I was still an International Master. Jaan is probably the rare exception in that he is a grandmaster with whom I have played more decisive games than draws.
I also would like to mention that on this day my students from Chicago paid a visit to the U.S. championship. I had no right to play an inferior game in front of them!
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗b4
The Ragozin is something I had expected from Jaan, but not as a main option.
5.♗g5 ♘bd7 6.e3 c5 7.cxd5 exd5 8.♗e2 ♕a5 9.0-0 c4



10.♘d2
Another attempt is to protect the c3 pawn: 10.♕c2 ♗xc3 11.bxc3 ♘e4 12.♖ac1 b5 13.♗f4 ♗b7 14.♘e5 ♘b6 15.f3 ♘d6 16.♘c6 ♕a3 17.♘a5 ♗c8 18.e4, and in the complicated game Hammer-Alexandrov, which was played the next day, White seemed happy with the outcome of the opening.
10...♗xc3 11.bxc3 ♕xc3 12.e4 0-0
This is a novelty. The more common continuation is 12...♘xe4 13.♘xe4 dxe4 14.♖c1 ♕a5 15.♗d2 ♕f5 16.♖xc4 0-0 17.♕c2, with compensation for the sacrificed pawn.



13.exd5
I spent some time choosing between two continuations, as well as recalling my analysis, since Jaan is a player who no matter how much you prepare will still play something else. One (13. e5) leads to a complicated position with opportunities to seize the initiative for both sides. The other one (13.exd5), which was played in the game, was more likely to be equal, but with some serious decisions to be made by Black.
13...♕xd4 14.♘xc4 ♕xd5 15.♕c1

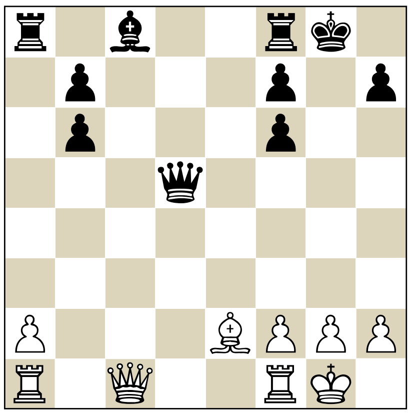


15...♘b6?!
Although this move looked natural to me during the game, the more I look at it now, the more I feel that this was one of the major reasons Black got into trouble. Although White is down a pawn and lots of pieces will be traded, the weakness of Black's king

position will still force him to work hard in order to achieve safety.

15...♘e4 16.♗e3 ♕e6, which is one of the variations I analysed before the game, would probably be better, but still Black cannot claim full equality yet.

16.♗xf6 gxf6 17.♘xb6 axb6



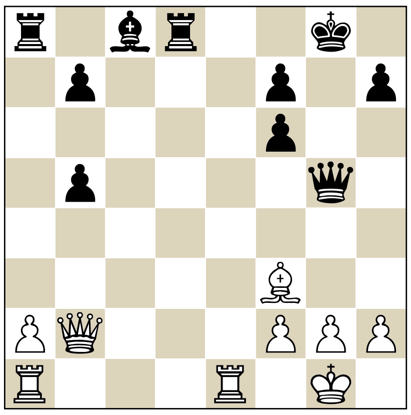
At this point I had to decide how to position my pieces correctly. I felt that the fact that there are not so many minor pieces on the board (especially no knights) might give Black some opportunities to equalize, although this is easier said than done!

I found that if I transfer my rook to the third rank and then put a pawn on a3, I would be able to create some threats, while Black won't have a direct way to protect his king as well as his weak b-pawns.

18.♗f3 ♕g5 19.♕b2 b5 20.♖fe1!

Although it seems logical to put a rook on the d-file, there is nothing for them to do over there!

20...♖d8



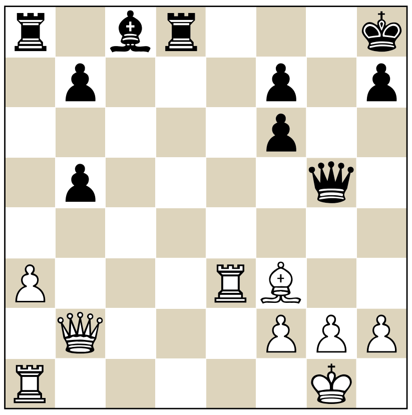
21.♖e3!

At this point it seemed that Jaan started feeling really uncomfortable. He spent a good portion of his time on his next obvious move and then went astray with 22...♖a4. It was not so simple to find the correct path in a practical game.

21...♔h8

21...♗e6 22.a3 (22.♗xb7? would be a blunder because of 22...♖xa2!) would allow me to complete my set-up and be ready to combine the threats to 5(!) isolated pawns and the king!

22.a3



22...♖a4?!

Jaan overextends his forces – he thought that bringing the rook to the d-file would yield him good play, but he had simply overlooked the most obvious way to stop it.

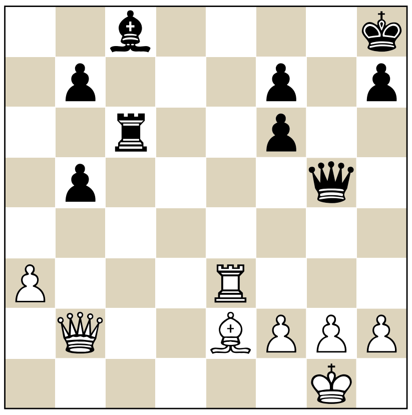
22...♖a6 was better, when after 23.♖ae1 ♖ad6 Black succeeds in developing his rook.

23.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 24.♗xd1 ♖c4 25.♗e2

Probably 25.♕d2 ♗e6 26.♕d8+ ♕g8 27.♕xf6+ ♕g7 28.♕d8+ ♕g8 29.♕d6 ♖c8 30.♕e5+ ♕g7 31.♕xb5, winning a pawn, was a more precise move order.

25...♖c6

If 25...♖c5 then 26.♕d2 with lots of threats on the 8th rank and g-file.

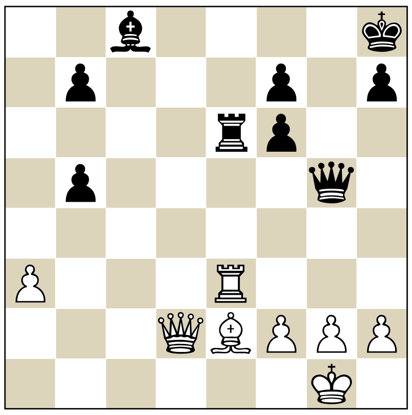


26.♕d2

After the game I thought that this move was an inaccuracy and that 26.♕d4 was stronger. I was planning to meet 25...♖c5 with 26.♕d2 and did the same against 25...♖c6, but it turns out that Black is still suffering after this.

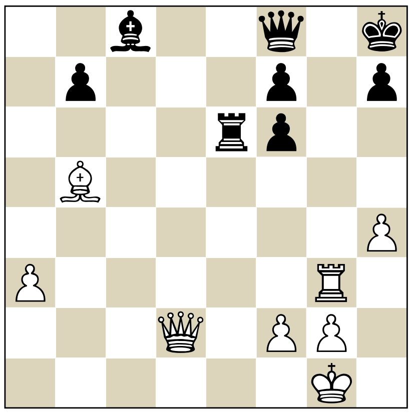
Here's the line I found: 26.♕d4 ♖e6 27.h4 ♕g7 28.♖xe6 ♗xe6 29.♕d8+ ♕g8 30.♕xf6+ ♕g7 31.♕d8+ ♕g8 32.♕xg8+ ♔xg8 33.♗xb5, and the endgame seems winning for White.

26...♖e6



27.h4! ♕g8 28.♖g3 ♕f8 29.♗xb5

White finally recovers the pawn and the position seems hopeless for Black.



29...♖d6

After 29...♖e5, which seems to be Black's best option, the computer points out that White can even trade bishops in order to keep the advantage: 30.♗d3 ♗f5 31.♗xf5 ♖xf5 32.a4 ♖e5 33.♕f4 ♖e6 34.a5 and then hunt down the b-pawn! What a change of strategy!

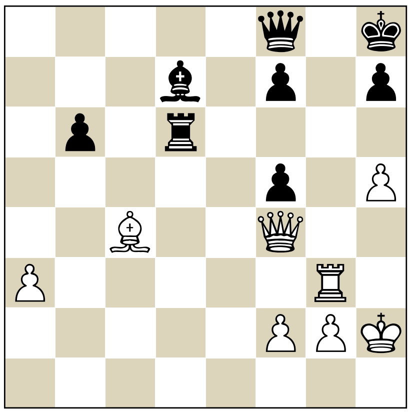
30.♕f4 b6

What else to do? Although only after

this move I realized how desperate Black's position is. 30...f5 is met by 31.♗c4.

31.♗d3 ♗d7 32.h5 ♖e6 33.♗c4 ♖d6 34.♔h2 f5?

34...♗e8, protecting f7, would allow Black to stay in his shell, but it seems that he would end up in a simple zugzwang after 35.♗b3, for instance: 35...b5 36.♕b4 with the idea of ♖d3.



35.♗xf7?!

Of course 35.♕e5+! f6 36.♕e7! would be simpler, but I thought Jaan had prepared a nice trick (36.♕xd6? ♕xd6! – pin!). Being low on time I did not calculate 35.♕e5+ any further. The move in the game is good enough.

35...♖f6 36.♖g8+ ♕xg8 37.♗xg8 ♔xg8 38.♕d4 ♖f7 39.♕xb6 f4 40.h6

We made the time-control, and Jaan resigned.

I felt happy that I did not embarrass myself in front of my students and played a great game. I had another chance in this tournament when it was very important to win my game, as I really felt obliged to repeat Bebeto's goal celebration at the World Cup match Brazil vs. Holland in 1994. My son Gabriel was born on April 24th during my second game against Robert Hess. I had no idea that it had happened precisely when the opening part was over and I missed an opportunity to cause great problems to Robert with 27...h5! The most shameful fact was that right after my wife Viktorija gave birth, she and Gabriel immediately started following my game!

NOTES BY
Samuel Shankland

NI 19.11 – E25
Samuel Shankland
Alexander Onischuk
St. Louis rapid playoff 2011 (2)

This was the second game of a two-game rapid match used as a tiebreaker to see who would get the coveted spot in the semi-finals. After holding an easy draw with black in Game 1, I was feeling particularly ambitious.

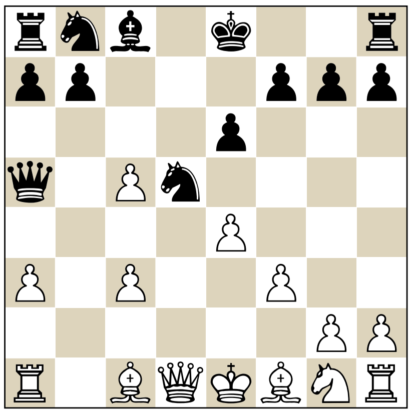
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3

Hopefully a surprise; I only played this move once before.

3...♗b4 4.f3

And I've never played this move before! However, my opponent did not flinch, as he had clearly done his homework on this highly topical line.

4...d5 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 c5 7.cxd5 ♘xd5 8.dxc5 ♕a5 9.e4



9...♘f6

Deviating from his previous games, where he played 9...♘e7, perhaps because of the 16.♘d4 novelty in the Anand-Wang Hao game (see the Wijk aan Zee report in New In Chess 2011/2, p.23).

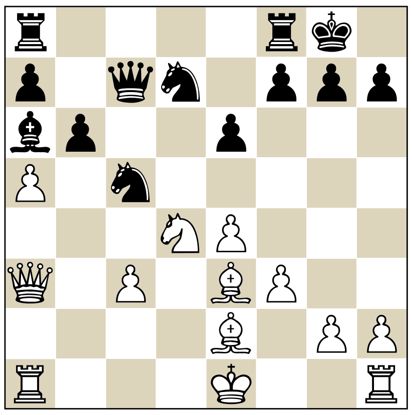
10.♗e3 0-0 11.♕b3 ♘fd7 12.a4 ♕c7 13.♕a3 b6 14.a5 ♗b7! 15.♘e2 The first independent move of the game.

15...♘xc5?! In my notes I gave 15...bxc5 as best.

16.♘d4

White has an edge due to his bishop pair, slightly more central control, and the annoying pressure on the black queenside, although the long-term structural weaknesses on the c4- and c5-squares cannot be overlooked.

16...♘bd7 17.♗e2 ♗a6



18.♗xa6

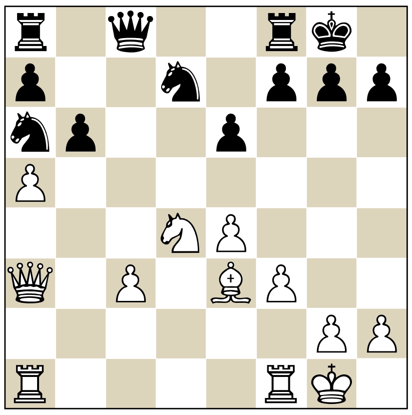
Trading the bishops felt to be more in the spirit of the position than the ugly 18.c4, but the latter was not bad either.

18...♘xa6 19.0-0 ♕c8?!

Intending ...♘e5-c4, but it seems awfully passive.

Bad was 19...♘e5?, as 20.♗f4 gives White a clear advantage.

Maybe best was 19...♖fc8 20.♘b5 ♕c6 21.♖fb1, with a white edge.



20.♘b5!

Looking to penetrate into d6 and put pressure on the a7 pawn.

After 20.♖fd1 ♘e5 21.axb6 axb6 Black puts a knight on c4 and solves his problems.

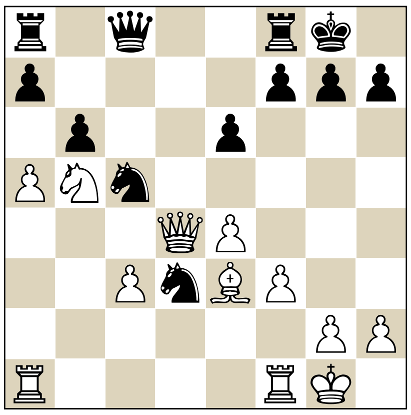
20...♘ac5 21.♕b4

The most natural move, 21.♖fd1, fails to 21...bxa5 22.♘d6 (22.♕xa5? ♘b3 leaves Black on top) 22...♕c6, and Black is fine.

21...♘d3?

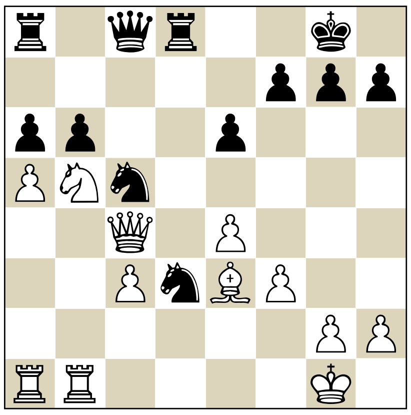
Black starts an aggressive operation that is of dubious objective value.

22.♕d4 ♘7c5



23.♖fb1? And here I let him off the hook. After the correct 23.e5!, intending on installing my knight on d6, White has a clear advantage.

23...♖d8 24.♕c4 a6



25.axb6 The only move. White sacrifices a piece for active play and a dangerous passed b-pawn. A blunder would be 25.♘d4?? b5 26.♕a2 ♘a4, and White is strategically lost.

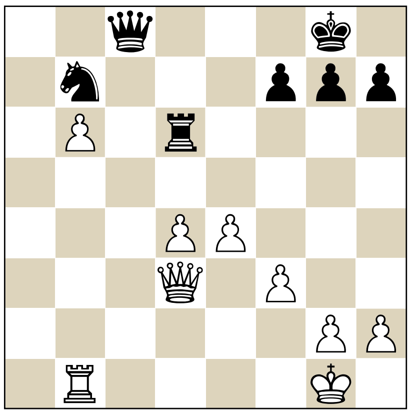
25...axb5 26.♕xb5 ♖xa1 27.♖xa1 ♘b7 28.♗d4 e5

After both 28...♘f4 29.g3 ♘g6 30.♖a7 and 28...♘dc5 29.♖a7 White has compensation for his material deficit.

29.♕xd3 exd4 30.cxd4

Oddly enough, this dynamic sequence has led to an equal position.

30...♖d6 31.♖b1



NEW IN CHESS

After a long day at the office the chess players unwind in the Board Room: Sam Shankland, Spencer Finegold, Tatev Abrahamyan, Ben Finegold and Robert Hess.

31...♖c6?!

Not a terrible move, but a step in the wrong direction. Black overestimated his position and thought he could play for an advantage.

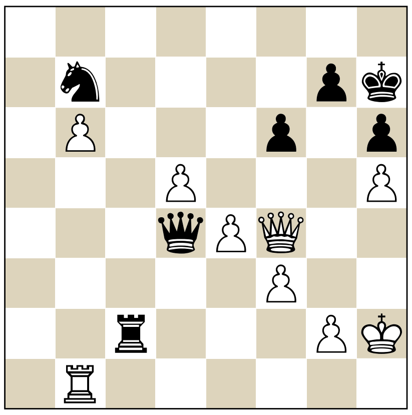
Safer was 31...♕d8 32.♕a6 ♖xd4 33.♕xb7 ♖d1+ 34.♖xd1 ♕xd1+ 35.♔f2 ♕d2+ 36.♔g3 ♕g5+, with a draw.

32.♕e3 ♖c3 33.♕f4 h6 34.h4 ♖c2 35.d5 ♕c5+ 36.♔h2 ♕f2 37.♕b8+ ♔h7 38.♕g3 ♕d4 39.♕f4

Black is unable to make progress without trading queens, but as we will see, that is a very risky decision to make.

39...♔g8 40.♕b8+ ♔h7 41.♕f4 f6 41...♔g8 42.♕b8+ leads to a draw.

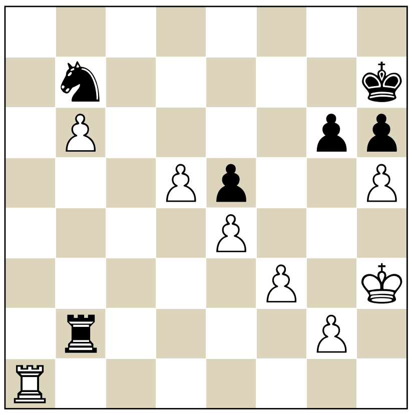
42.h5



42...♕e5? 43.♕xe5

Black must have badly misjudged this endgame.

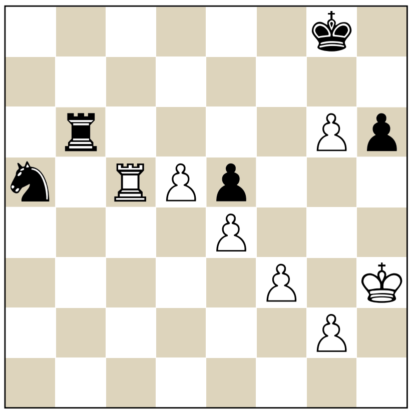
43...fxe5 44.♔h3 g6 45.♖a1! ♖b2



46.♖c1

Even stronger was 46.♖a7! ♖xb6 47.d6 ♔g7 48.hxg6 ♔xg6 49.d7 ♘d8 50.♖a8 ♘f7 51.d8♕ ♘xd8 52.♖xd8. Black will face a very long, and probably unsuccessful, struggle to make a draw.

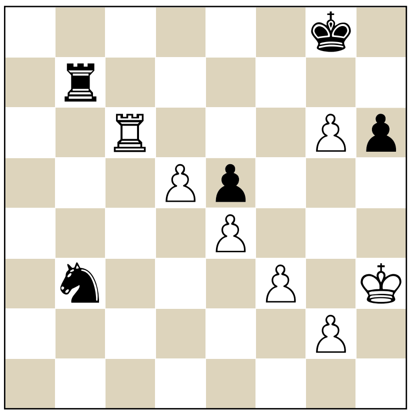
46...♖xb6 47.♖c7+ ♔g8 48.hxg6 ♘a5 49.♖c5



49...♘b3?? The black knight is going in the wrong direction. He should have gone 49...♘b7 50.♖c8+ ♔g7

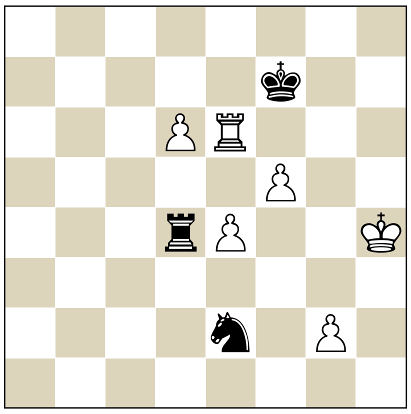
51.♖b8 ♖b5 52.♖e8. This position is similar to the game. Black is in trouble, but still breathing.

50.♖c6 ♖b7



51.♖e6?? White returns the favor. The right move was 51.d6! ♖d7 52.♖c8+ ♔g7 53.♖c7 ♘c5 54.♖xc5 ♖xd6 55.♖xe5, with an easily won game.

51...♘d4 52.♖xe5 ♔g7 53.♖e8 ♔xg6 54.f4 ♖b3+ 55.♔h4 ♖d3 56.d6 ♘e2 57.f5+ ♔f7 58.♖e7+ ♔f6 59.♖e6+ ♔f7 60.♖xh6 ♖d4 61.♖e6



61...♘f4?

The final nail in Black's coffin.

After 61...♘c3 62.d7 ♖xd7 63.g4 Black still has some chances to hold on.

62.♖e7+ ♔f8 Or 62...♔f6 63.♔g4 ♘xg2 64.♖e6+ ♔f7 65.♔g5, and wins.

63.♔g5 ♘d3

63...♖xd6 would have prolonged the suffering, but not for long: 64.e5 ♖a6 (64...♖d2 65.♖a7 ♘d5 66.g4 and wins) 65.♖h7 ♘xg2 (65...♘d5 66.g4) 66.e6 ♘e3 67.e7+ ♔e8 68.f6, and wins.

64.e5 ♘f4 65.g4 ♘d5 66.♖a7 ♘e3 67.♔f6 ♘xg4+ 68.♔e6 ♖e4 69.d7 ♖xe5+ 70.♔d6

Black resigned.

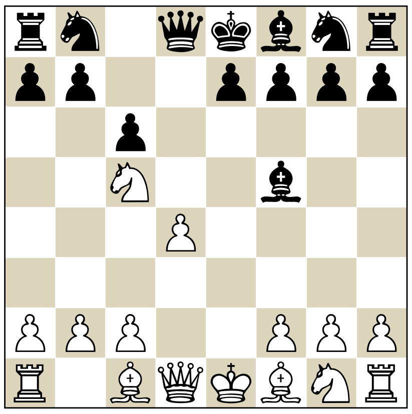
NOTES BY

Robert Hess

CK 10.1 – B18
Robert Hess
Benjamin Finegold
St. Louis 2011 (2)

Despite throwing away a win in this game from the group stage, it was perhaps my best played game of the event (at least before move 41).

1.e4 c6 2.♘c3 d5 3.d4 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♗f5 5.♘c5



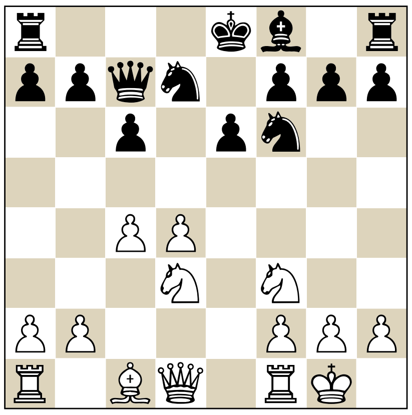
I wanted to avoid preparation early, so I played this 'dubious' move for the first time in my life. I was trying to just play chess and avoid main lines. My strategy worked out well, as can be seen in the next few moves.

5...♕c7

My choice of 5.♘c5 came as a shock to Ben, as he had not prepared for it at all. His reply is definitely not the best, as 5...e5 is considered the main move, and is what I was expecting.

Other options include 5...♘d7 and 5...b6.

6.♗d3 ♗xd3 7.♘xd3 e6 8.♘f3 ♘d7 9.0-0 ♘gf6 10.c4

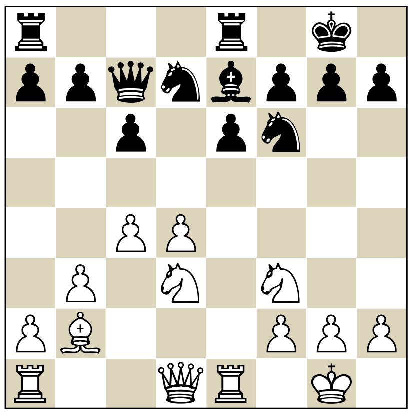


Here I was very happy. I had clearly won the opening battle (which is surprising in my games) with my large space advantage and the better minor pieces.

10...♗e7 11.♖e1 0-0 12.b3

I had trouble deciding if I should trade bishops with 12.♗f4 ♗d6 13.♗xd6 ♕xd6 14.♕b3 c5 15.♕a3 ♖ac8, but realized that this position gives White just a tiny advantage.

12...♖fe8 13.♗b2

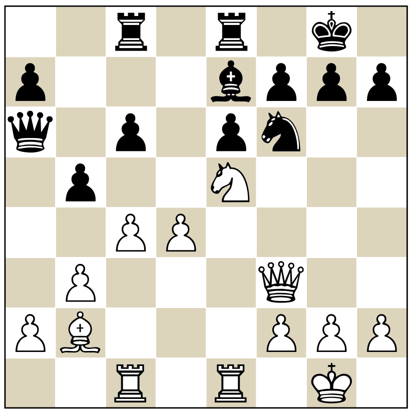


13...b5?!

An active try that only weakens Black's queenside pawns. This pawn push is typical when Black is attempting to secure the d5-square for the knight, but here it is too risky.

13...♖ad8 is more solid, but leaves Black without a real plan.

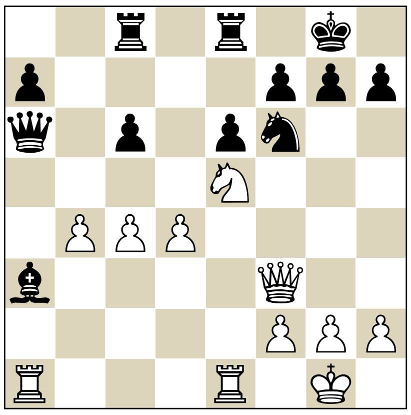
14.♖c1 ♕b6 15.♘de5 ♘xe5 16.♘xe5 ♖ac8 17.♕f3 ♕a6



18.a4!

Ben didn't see this move coming when he went ...♕a6, but it is a very strong one. Black is forced to cripple his pawn structure, and I only gain space.

18...bxa4 19.♖a1 a3 20.♗xa3 ♗xa3 21.b4

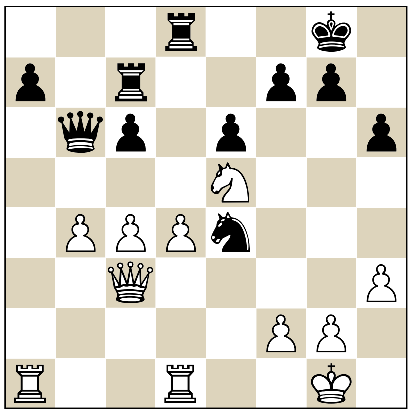


21...♕b6

Somewhat similar to the game looks 21...♖ed8 22.♕e3 ♕b6 23.♕xa3 ♖c7 24.♖ed1, as White retains a big advantage, while Black is forced to just shuffle around pieces. Active play cannot be found: 24...♖xd4? 25.c5 ♖xd1+ 26.♖xd1 ♕b8 27.♕a4 ♕a8 28.♖d6, and Black is busted. The passed pawns will break through.

22.♕xa3 ♖c7 23.♕c3 ♖d8 24.♖ed1 h6 25.h3 ♘e4

Black has the annoying task of trying to find constructive moves in a much worse position, while White just piles on pressure. At the moment I don't have a clear breakthrough plan. However, it was here that I found the plan to sacrifice an exchange on f6, which I eventually executed on move 37. Black's knight was annoying me, so I felt the urge to swing a rook to the kingside and capture it!



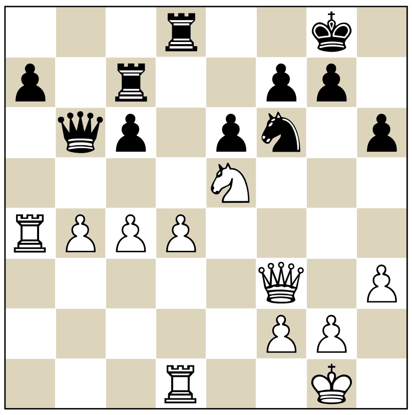
26.♕e3 ♘f6 27.♖a4

White's 'weak pawns' are all covered and the space advantage is crucial. White can continue to exert pressure, while Black must resort to shuffling pieces.

27...♕b8

Here 27...♘d7 28.♘d3 ♕b8 29.♖aa1 ♘b6 30.♖dc1 ♘c8 looks silly and is hard to recommend, but maybe it is a more stubborn defensive strategy?

28.♕f3 ♕b6



29.♕f4

The following sequence of moves was nearly impossible to plan out. I saw a few moves here, but this is a ridiculous line I found when plugging the game

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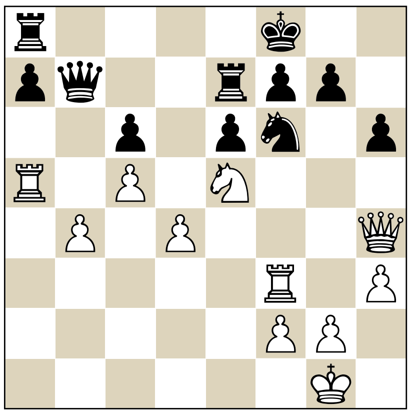
into the engines: 29.♖da1 ♖dc8 30.c5 ♕b8 31.♖a6 ♘d5 32.♖xc6 ♕xb4 33.♖xa7 ♕xd4 34.♖cxc7 ♖xc7 35.♖a8+ ♔h7 36.♘xf7 ♖xc5 37.♘g5+ ♔g6 38.♘xe6 ♖c1+ 39.♔h2 ♕e5+ 40.♕g3+ ♕xg3+ 41.♔xg3, and this should give Black good chances to draw. A truly ridiculous variation that I never had any hope of finding. Engines can do ridiculous things!

29...♖b7 30.♖d3 ♖e7 31.♕h4 ♔f8 32.c5 ♕b5 33.♖da3 ♖a8 34.♖a5 ♕b7 35.♖f3!

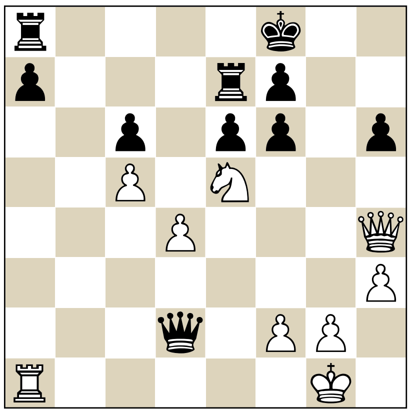


Finally! 10 moves after I first saw the idea I got to implement it. Here I felt that it'd only be a matter of moves until victory was mine. Little did I know...

35...♕xb4 36.♖a1

Instead of this rook move, 36.♘xc6 ♕b1+ 37.♔h2 ♖c7 38.♘e5 is probably more troublesome for Black.

36...♕d2 37.♖xf6 gxf6

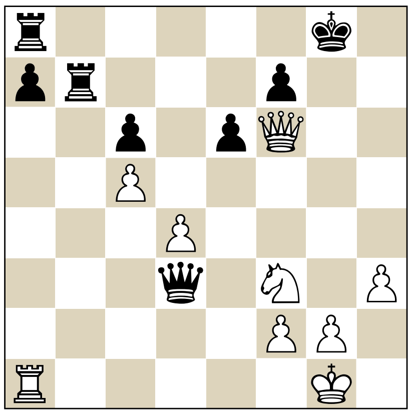


38.♘f3

The first sub-optimal move in a horrible sequence.

38.♕xf6 ♕g5 39.♕h8+ ♕g8 40.♕xh6+ ♕g7 41.♕f4 is simply crushing.

38...♕d3 39.♕xh6+ ♔g8 40.♕xf6 ♖b7

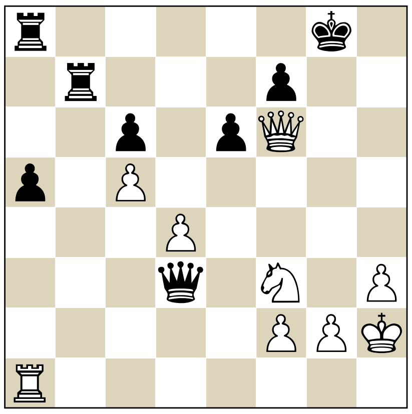


41.♔h2??

I wish I could give this move 20 question marks, blame it on time-trouble, or say I touched my king by mistake. I was worried about some ...♖b1+ ideas that would never work. I had a ridiculous mental lapse, and blundered horribly. As they say, mistakes come in pairs...

I should have played 41.♘e5 ♕f5 (the move I somehow was worried about, 41...♖b1+, loses immediately to 42.♔h2. What a difference a move makes!) 42.♕xf5 exf5 43.♘xc6 or 43.♖a6, with a significant edge for White.

41...a5



42.♖xa5??

Again, after 42.♘e5 ♕f5 43.♕h6 f6 44.♘g4 ♖f8 45.♖xa5 White probably should win.

42...♖xa5 43.♕d8+ ♔g7 44.♕xa5 ♕e4 45.♕c3 f6 46.♔g3 ♕g6+ 47.♔h2 ♕e4 48.♔g3

Draw. Black has chances to play on here, but I think a draw is the natural result. A disappointing finish to a dominating game, but c'est la vie.

NOTES BY

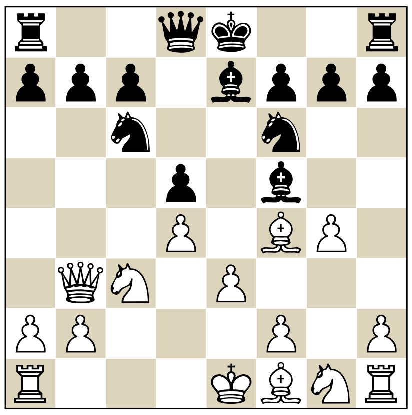
Anna Zatonskih

QO 11.3 – D35
Irina Krush
Anna Zatonskih
St. Louis 2011 (KO 1.5)

This game was of decisive importance for the semi-final. By this point we had already met five times – one game in the preliminary group and four times in this semi-final – and in three of those games I was Black. In all three there was a Queen's Gambit, and in the opening the games had gone quite well for White.

Therefore I was expecting the opening which occurred in this game.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗e7 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♗f4 ♘f6 6.e3 ♗f5 7.♕b3 ♘c6 8.g4



8...♘xg4 9.♕xd5 ♕xd5

9...♕c8 leads to a sharper and less well-explored game after 10.♕g2 0-0 11.0-0-0!? (11.e4 ♗xe4 occurred in the blindfold game Aronian-Kramnik, Monaco Amber 2011).

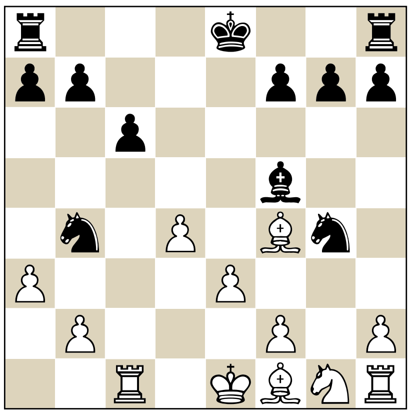
Because of the distinctive feature of this last Armageddon game (a draw would decide the tiebreak in Black's favour), I wanted to avoid such a development of events.

10.♘xd5 ♗b4+

10...0-0-0 11.♘xe7+ ♘xe7 occurred in our game from the preliminary tournament.

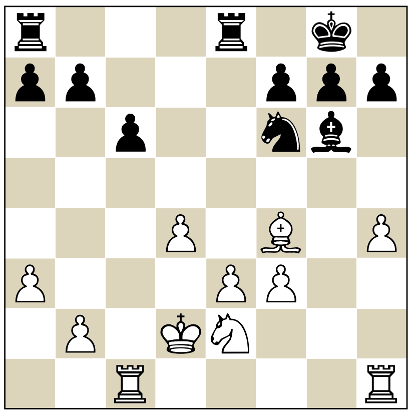
The move played leads to similar positions, but it is more accurate.

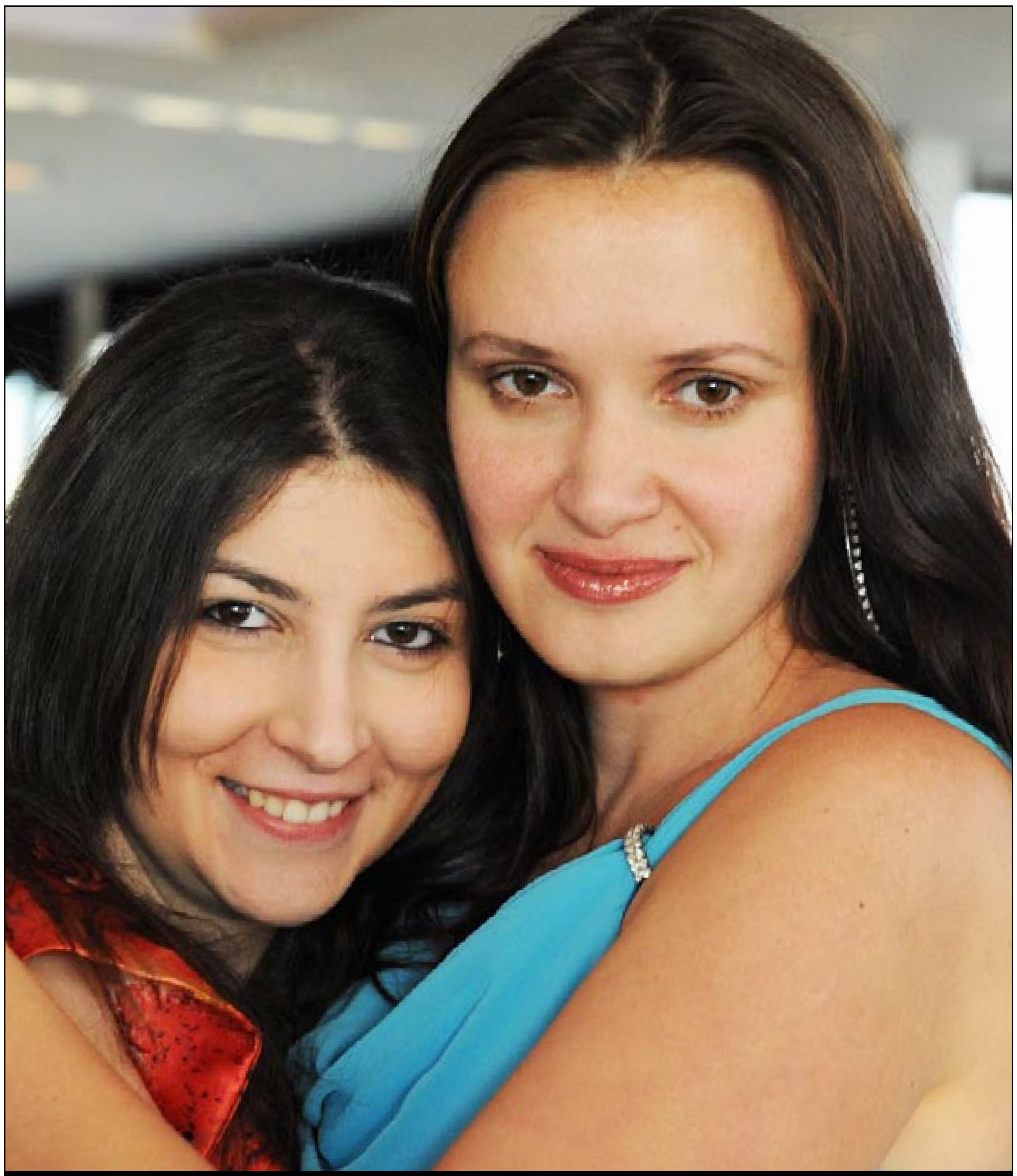
11.♘xb4 ♘xb4 12.♖c1 c6 13.a3



13...♘d3+
13...♘d5 14.h3 ♘gf6 15.♗e5 ♘d7 16.♗h2? (16.♗d6) 16...0-0 occurred in the first of our tiebreak games (16...♘xe3!).
14.♗xd3 ♗xd3 15.f3 ♘f6 16.♔d2 ♗g6 17.♘e2 0-0 18.h4

I think that White should not be in a hurry to occupy the centre with e3-e4. 18.♖c3!? ♘d5 19.♖b3 b5 20.h4 is a very interesting possibility, intensifying the pressure on the queenside and trying to provoke weaknesses, which can later be attacked.
18...♖fe8





After a long and gripping final that could have gone either way, Tatev Abrahamyan and Anna Zatonskih were quick to show the world that they were still the best of friends.

Semi-finals

Zatonskih-Krush 3-2
Abrahamyan-Baginskaite 3-1

Final 3rd-4th place

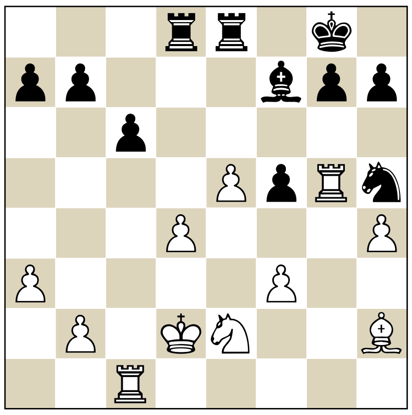
Krush-Baginskaite 1½-½

Final

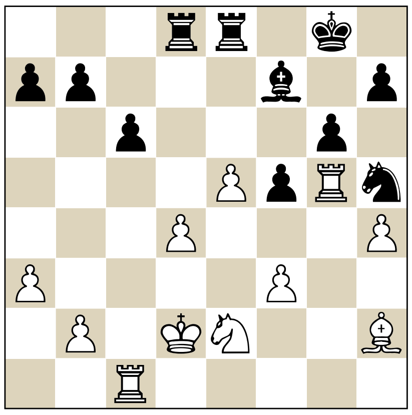
Zatonskih-Abrahamyan 2½-2½

(Zatonskih draws the Armageddon game with black.)

19.e4?! This rather hasty move gives Black a clear counter-attacking plan. It was better not to determine the position in the centre. White's position was still preferable after 19.♖hg1.
19...♘h5 20.♖hg1 f5 21.e5 ♖ad8 22.♗h2 ♗f7 23.♖g5



23...g6 23...h6!? was an interesting alternative, making the exchange sacrifice on h5 less effective. The drawback is that the g6-square is weakened and the comfortable manoeuvre of the knight via g7 to e6 is not possible.



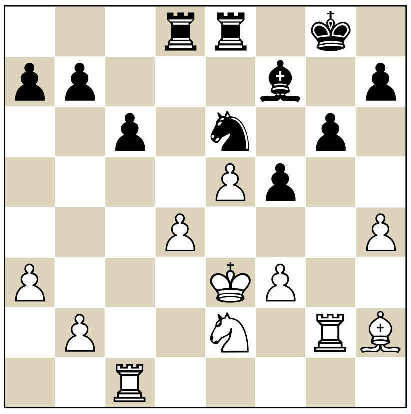
24.♖g2?!
After this move it is hard for White to set Black any problems. The exchange sacrifice 24.♖xh5!? gxh5 25.♖g1+ ♔f8 26.♗f4 ♖e6 27.♔e3 was the best practical chance.

St. Louis 2011 women cat. V

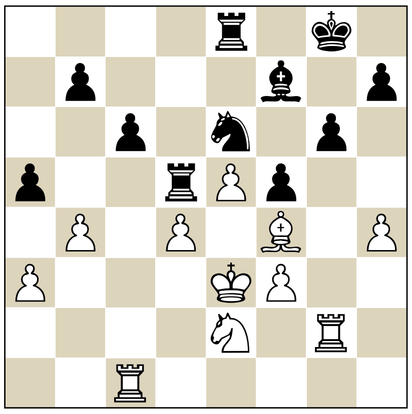
					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		TPR
1	Irina Krush	IM	USA	2472	*	1	½	0	1	1	1	1	5½	2578
2	Tatev Abrahamyan	WFM	USA	2326	0	*	1	½	1	1	½	½	4½	2470
3	Camilla Baginskaite	WGM	USA	2342	½	0	*	½	½	1	1	1	4½	2468
4	Sabina-Francesca Foisor	WGM	USA	2350	1	½	½	*	0	0	1	1	4	2415
5	Anna Zatonskih	IM	USA	2499	0	0	½	1	*	1	1	½	4	2394
6	Rusudan Goletiani	IM	USA	2367	0	0	0	1	0	*	½	½	2	2205
7	Iryna Zenyuk	CM	USA	2245	0	½	0	0	0	½	*	1	2	2222
8	Alisa Melekhina	FM	USA	2304	0	½	0	0	½	½	0	*	1½	2142

Playoff: Zatonskih-Foisor 2-0

24...♘g7 25.♔e3 ♘e6



26.♗f4 ♖d5 27.b4 a5



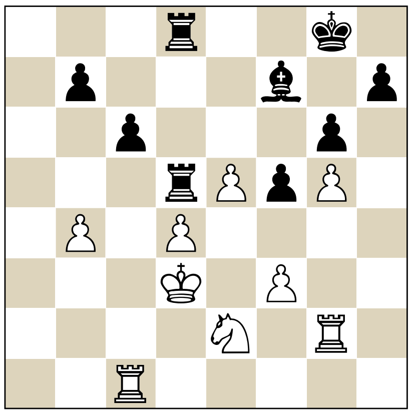
28.♔d3??

The decisive mistake in a roughly equal position. White needed to win, but no clear plan is apparent.

28...♖ed8

28...axb4 29.axb4 ♖xd4+! would have been immediately decisive, but the move in the game does not spoil anything.

29.♗g5 ♘xg5 30.hxg5 axb4 31.axb4



31...♖xe5 32.♖c5 ♖e7 33.b5 ♗d5 34.♖f2 b6 35.♖c1 cxb5

White resigned. ■

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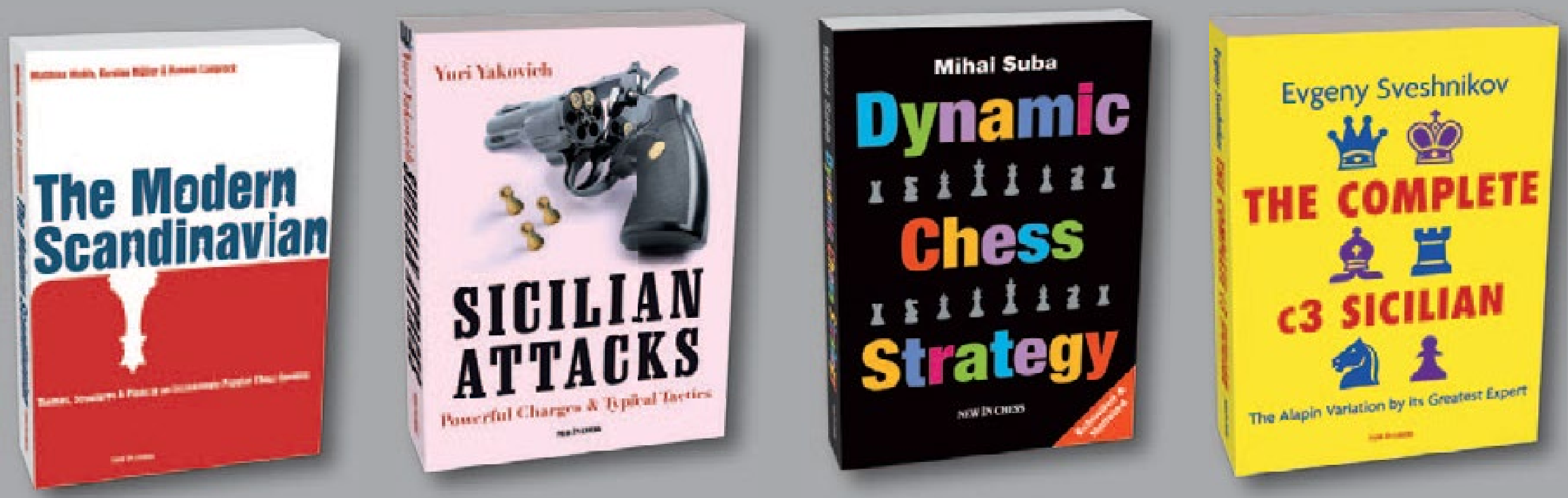
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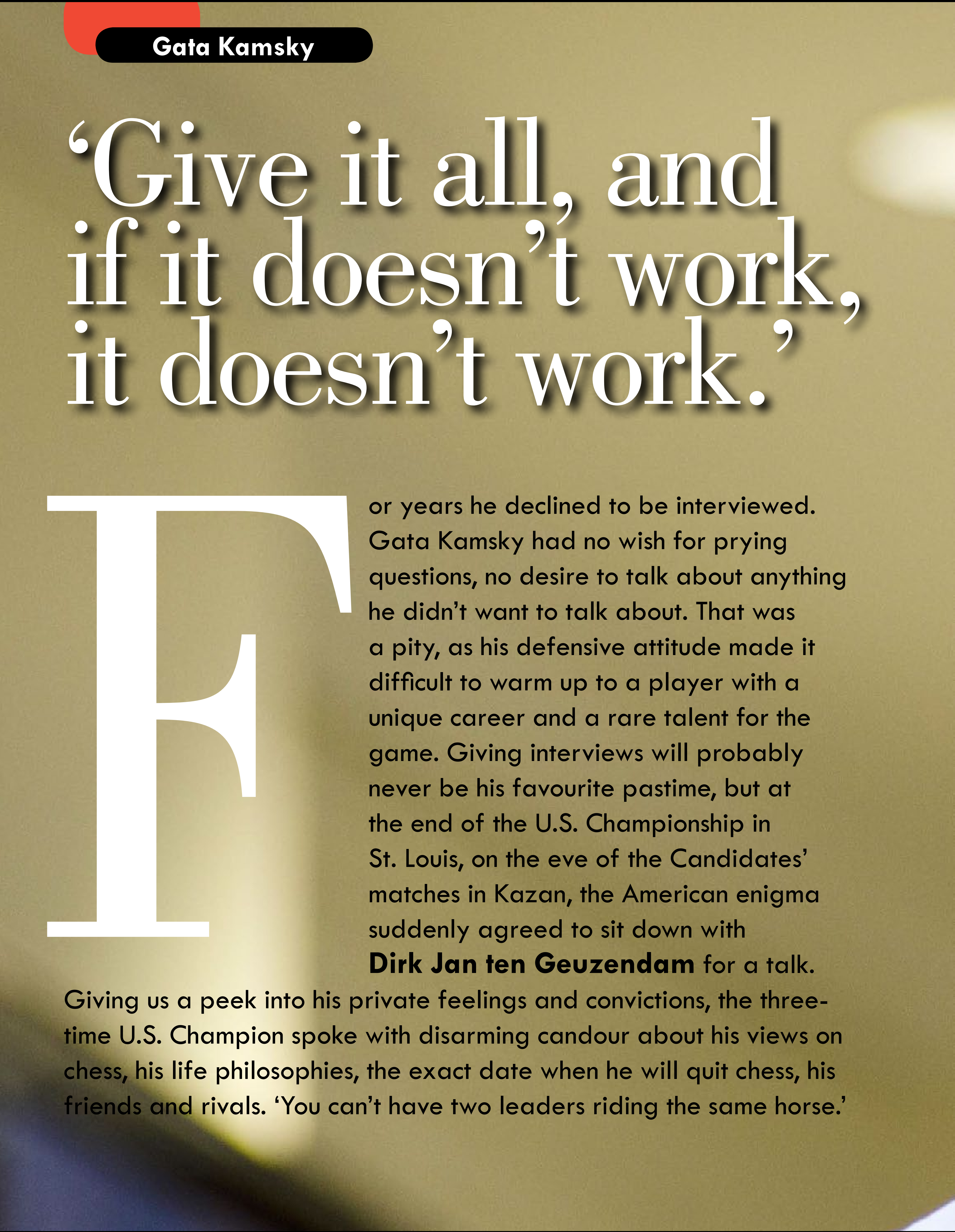

‘Give it all, and if it doesn’t work, it doesn’t work.’

For years he declined to be interviewed. Gata Kamsky had no wish for prying questions, no desire to talk about anything he didn’t want to talk about. That was a pity, as his defensive attitude made it difficult to warm up to a player with a unique career and a rare talent for the game. Giving interviews will probably never be his favourite pastime, but at the end of the U.S. Championship in St. Louis, on the eve of the Candidates’ matches in Kazan, the American enigma suddenly agreed to sit down with **Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam** for a talk. Giving us a peek into his private feelings and convictions, the three-time U.S. Champion spoke with disarming candour about his views on chess, his life philosophies, the exact date when he will quit chess, his friends and rivals. ‘You can’t have two leaders riding the same horse.’

SAINT LOUIS CHESS CLUB

Minutes after he has won the U.S. Championship for the third time in his career, Gata Kamsky appears in the basement room of the St. Louis Chess Club, where Maurice Ashley and Jennifer Shahade, in front of a live audience, provide commentary and interviews for the official website. Kamsky walks in at a firm pace and climbs the podium with his typical 'let's get this thing over as quickly as possible' determination. When he sits down his look is empty and uninviting. He briefly smiles and waves when he is introduced. Brief smiles and short laughs will return at irregular intervals, every time to the almost palpable relief of everyone present, but mostly his answers are factual and given with an expressionless face.

> 'At elite tournaments you don't see them as friends, they are all competitors.'

As Kamsky replies to the questions, Ashley sits staring at him. The American grandmaster and star commentator, who can talk life and excitement into a king vs. king ending, is atypically silent and is clearly searching for a way to lighten up the atmosphere. His moment comes when Kamsky suddenly starts trash-talking. Asked if his win in the championship gives him a boost for his forthcoming Candidates' match against Topalov, he agrees and explains that he is now the strongest player of the United States, which is encouraging, particularly as the U.S. is the strongest country of the America's (Ashley: 'The whole hemisphere is yours!') and Topalov is from where? Bulgaria, a small country somewhere in Europe! Everyone laughs, but the comic relief is short-lived. Kamsky quickly adds that he is only joking and turns serious again.

After seven minutes Ashley and Shahade have no more questions for the champion, who doesn't seem to mind leaving the stage. Two more duties are waiting. He has to say a few words for television, and Mike Wilmering, the communications specialist of the club, has informed him that I'd like to talk to him. For the television interview he goes up to the Board Room, where I watch him from a corner. It's an eye-opener. Knowing that he is talking for a broad audience Kamsky lets his guard down and tries to give answers that may be helpful for viewers who know little or nothing about chess. Downright touching is his attempt to explain his solid style to laymen. He explains that for him every piece has its own soul and that if he manages to let them work together he feels happy.

And then it's my turn. The first time I met Gata Kamsky was in 1990, when as a 16-year-old he made his debut in Tilburg and shared first place with Vasily Ivanchuk. That victory was the launch of a stupendous international career marked by historical victories and countless controversies stirred up by his dominant and ever-present father Rustem. The last time I asked Gata Kamsky for an interview was about eight years ago, when he had married and seemed to have entered a new phase in his life. That request he declined. In the years that followed we met at various events and would talk briefly. Occasionally he was friendly, occasionally indifferent, and generally inaccessible.

As we are looking for a quiet place to talk, he reminds me of his earlier refusal and remarks with a half-smile that I have finally trapped him, now that he cannot say no. To me this doesn't seem to be the best topic to go into now. Instead I continue to focus on finding a place where we can have some privacy, which turns out to be the room of Tony Rich, the executive director of the St. Louis Chess Club.

When I was listening to you up in the Board Room talking to the television crew, I was fascinated and at some point I was almost staring at you in disbelief. When you said, I sound like a priest and I don't want to be that. At the same time you are speaking so beautifully about how you view chess. Why are you so reluctant to reveal your thoughts about chess?

'Because I am still an active competitor.'

You think you're giving away things?

'Sure. Every time you say something about yourself you give away something for an opponent to focus on, to zero in on and to try to exploit.'

At the same time it reveals something about your love for the game.

'It's a fair trade. I try not to reveal much, but these guys here are just like my family. After my own family these guys are like my second family. The people in this club, at the championship, I feel really close to them. And I think they try to improve chess, especially the youngsters. They are doing everything. They bring scholastic chess, they have Maurice (Ashley) and Jen (Shahade), and I just want to help them on their quest, whatever I can do. I wouldn't otherwise be talking about all this stuff, of course. I am also trying to prepare for my teaching career later (starts laughing). Soon I'll be 40, and you know, here you go, it's like advertising (laughs harder).'

You really have the feeling that by saying these things you are giving away things?

'Sure, yeah. Anything can be interpreted and everything is connected. It's like deductive reasoning, from one thing you can deduct another. The Soviets were really good at that. We had these whole chess think tanks, like when they were preparing for Bobby (Fischer), analyzing everything, his statements, his preferences, his style, all the books that he studied, his interviews. Every single word they studied. So, yeah.'

Even when you say something beautiful like for me every piece has a soul and I try to bring them to work together and when they are doing that I am happy?
'Well, I don't know, I can't really analyze for them, that's their thing to do, to analyze what I say. But that's how I feel and I just say it. Why not? Sometimes I feel like saying something.'

You quoted someone saying that your style is dry. Isn't it rather extremely robust?
'I'm not saying it's robust. It's the way I play and the way I like to play. The way I see the game. Chess as a philosophy and an art. Like I said, there are two types of players. Some players just want to crush you. They want to kill and destroy their opponent. That's just not me.'

You don't want to be crushed and look for opportunities.
'The way I see it is we're both creating a masterpiece together. It's like I am doing my harmony, he is doing his harmony. I am doing my sequence of moves and all these different parts where all pieces are coming into play. And he is doing the same, and together we create this beautiful symphony. And in the end it's just a matter of who is the better player.'

But then your opponent can spoil the symphony by making a bad move?
'Well, it doesn't really spoil it, because even one bad move creates an opportunity to show why your harmony works better. There is no such thing as a spoiled game here. Of course it's different if you have an absolutely terrible blunder. In terms of sport, if you have been defending for six hours and then one blunder spoils the game. That feels bad. But I mean, you cannot create masterpieces all the time. You have to try, but sometimes you fail of course.'

If your opponent slightly damages the symphony it gives you the chance to make it a bit more beautiful.
'Well, you have to step up to the bar, you have to exploit the mistake, and the symphony becomes more of you then. But everyone gets a chance, chess is fair.'

You say you don't want to give away things to your opponents. At the press conference today you crack a joke and you see that people appreciate this. That's the Gata they want to see. And you show so little of that.
'What do you mean?'

In general you have this very defensive attitude.
'Sure. But as I said, this is more like my family. Here I am feeling more free to express myself. Because I know all these guys. I've been with them for so many years. For two weeks we're in this together, like when there were these heavy rains (during the championship St. Louis was hit by a tornado and saw fairly extreme weather conditions – DJtG). We have to socialize, we have to develop friendships. And at tournaments of the elite level, phew... You don't see them as friends, they are all competitors. They socialize but you still can feel there is no full connection. It's disconnect here, disconnect there. And I just don't like that.'

Did you have bad experiences there?
'I'm not saying I had bad experiences, but I just don't feel connected. Here I feel connected to the people. And in the U.S. I feel at home of course. In whatever other tournaments I play, I am a stranger in a strange land and I just try to protect myself and cut my losses.'

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SAINT LOUIS CHESS CLUB

Gata Kamsky cracks a joke and gets the full attention of Sam Shankland, Maurice Ashley and Jennifer Shahade.

Part of this feeling of being a stranger is a self-chosen exile. I remember a sociable event like the Amber tournament where you were very much sticking to yourself.
'Well, that's ... What do you want me to do? (Laughs) It's just the way I am as a person, I guess.'

You're very much on your own?
'Yeah, I am very much of a lone player, because I believe that everything in life depends on you. Sure, you need some friends to help you out. There have been some really good friends of mine that helped me out in my time of need. But they are not that many. It all depends on you. How you want to live your life? The way I live my life I am perfectly happy right now. And if that makes me happy, why change it?'

And what other people think...
'They can think whatever they want. If they are my friends it is important to me what they think; if it's someone else... I don't look upon myself as some sort of a role model, although I think a bit of it that way because in terms of chess I try to impart some knowledge that I have to all these youngsters. But I don't see myself as a role model, I am not perfect. I have done horrible things in my life. I don't claim to be such, but I now try to lead my life the way I want to lead it, without thinking what others think of me. And I am happy.'

This is in fact the life you have always been looking for?
'Yes, I live life the way I want to now.'

Emil (Sutovsky, second and manager) is part of your success...
'Oh sure, sure, Emil is a huge friend. He is always connected, always ready to give advice. It's always back and forth, back and forth. It's nice to stay in touch, not just about chess or preparation. It's nice to have friends like that, so I am really happy.'

He is very different from you. More outgoing...
'And that's perfect. Differences attract and complement each other. And, you don't know this, but we're really not so very different (starts laughing).'

He has a great passion for music. You also talk about music?
'Oh sure, we can talk music, we can do a lot of things, but of course I don't have all this very deep knowledge that he possesses. He is simply like a walking encyclopaedia. If I have some question I always ask Emil. Like what happened on this and that day, and he immediately knows the answer. It's so nice to have a friend like that (laughs loudly).'

When I came here I thought, well, whatever happens, in the end Gata will win the tournament. I guess that many people thought that...
'Sure...'

But then there is one of my favourite quotes from Anand, who told me years ago that things may look easy from the outside, but you never know the demons in a player's head.
'Exactly.'

Did you have any doubts during the tournament?
'No, at this level, after playing for so many years in tournaments, you don't do that. It's counterproductive. You're trying to eliminate the things that are counterproductive. I have learned that I just have to focus on each game, one step at a time, don't think about the result. If I am satisfied with my game nothing else matters.'

When you play a good game to your taste...
'That's all that matters...'

As in the end it will automatically add up to a good result.
'If it does, it does, if it doesn't, it doesn't. I mean I have played games that I lost while actually thinking that I had played really well. And I felt, OK, so I lost and my opponent was a superior symphony player this time.'

You can really be that philosophical about it?
'Sure, you have to be, otherwise you won't survive. If you take everything so personally... I think that is the big problem of Vasily (Ivanchuk). He was a genius, way above us. If he just hadn't taken every single game so personally, he would have won the world championship a long time ago. But it's his nature, he is so maximalist. He wants every game to be a masterpiece, every game, and then he takes it so hard.'

For you it doesn't matter if people say the game you played was pretty

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ugly, because this was just the way you wanted to play it.

'If I recognize it. It's also all about the analysis. Many things are going on at the same time. At the psychological level, your chess level, your analysis level, the way you feel. Sometimes you feel like you want to blast everything, but you don't have the energy. So what do you do? It's choices you have to make. In chess it's a lot about choices. I used to think that chess was more about just who is better on the board. It's not. It's all about choices. It's give and take, how you feel, it's about knowing yourself. To get to know yourself takes years of practice, learning and going through mistakes. But I feel that I am at that level now.'

Is it wisdom that makes you happy? That you found some balance? It sounds almost Buddhist...

'Well, it is. I am very interested in Buddhism. But it's not just that, it's like... it makes you happy. That's what you got to do and you have to do it.'

And for you that is getting some things done well.

'Whatever I am doing I try to do it to the best of my abilities. That's the rule. A lot of successful people all more or less follow this rule. Give it all, and if it doesn't work, it doesn't work. But you know that you gave it your all and you're satisfied with yourself, because in the end if you're not satisfied with yourself it feels like crap. But if you feel you gave it your all, who cares?'

That's the champion's attitude that you see everywhere...

'That's why I lost the last match against Topalov. I knew that at that point that was the maximum that I could do. Because I had so many problems in my life at that point. I had one and a half months of preparation for the match, all those things with the manager, the Ukrainian guy, Chernenko, and my dad, and my divorce. It was horrible.'

And all this has been resolved. You found a basis now...

'More or less, yes. I won't say anything before the match (against Topalov), we'll see. He has been one of the best players in the world for, what is it, the last five years? He is really at the top of his game and a lot of people think with good reason that his chances are much higher. I'll just say, probably. Probably, but again, it's all about the chess. It's all about the moment, how you come to the game and how you feel. If you feel in your best chess moment then you don't make mistakes and nobody can beat you. But Veselin is known for his style and his style is not so great for me, because he has this ability to always create problems. And precisely in positions that I don't particularly enjoy myself. I like simplicity, sort of classical music and this is like jazz, this is like... I don't know how to say this... rap! (laughs loudly)'

'I like simplicity, sort of classical music, and this is like jazz, this is like ... rap!'

It's the kind of aggressive chess that you played as a youngster.

'No, no. I was playing aggressive classical chess, like Anatoly Karpov did. I never played this dynamic chess. Kasparov and Topalov, that's their style, they are the show business stars in this.'

For you it was not sacrificing exchanges, but just the initiative.

'Just the initiative and the positional demands. You only sacrifice the exchange if the position demands it. If you don't have to sacrifice I just go for the clear-cut and simple chess thing.'

If you wanted to play classical music on the chess board, who would be your favourite composer?

'Different periods and different composers; it depends on the mood and everything. I was always fond of Beethoven and I was always fond of Mozart. Chopin is pretty good. And of course all the Russian classics, but to be honest, I don't know them that well.'

It's funny, it's all about harmony. In music, in your chess, what you want from life...

'Oh, sure, sure. I mean, that's the philosophy. You don't have a typical approach to this or a typical approach to that, you try to sort of blend in everything together, try to understand and then try to find your own way how to approach everything. And try to be systematic about it. It's not like let's throw in this, let's be wild here, let's hide here (laughs apologetically).'

And the best harmony you find in your own solitude or the circle of your closest friends.

'Again, it depends. At high-level chess we all travel a lot. Surely there is not much time you can spend with your friends and your family, so you learn to value that time. Most of the other time, yeah, you are alone. And that's... You just get used to it. You seem to be alone but at the same time there is always something to do, so you don't particularly focus on being alone. Because there is life. You think like there is a long life ahead of you, but if you just look back at when you were 20 and you think of all the things you wanted to do when you were 20 and you look at yourself now, you realize there are so many things you haven't done yet. So many things to try to do. And then of course you get older, you get all the other obligations and stuff and then the priorities change. And you have to find your harmony again. I have to find time to pursue all those things and at the same time to give time to other things. Still play chess, a career, family, friends, time for yourself, it's not so simple.'

In chess the master of harmony was always Smyslov...
'Yes, Smyslov, but he was way before me, so I didn't quite study all his games. I met him and I remember him really fondly, but I was just so young and always respectful and I was afraid to talk. That is why I am trying to give these guys here a sense of don't be so respectful, get your chance while we can.'

The funny thing is, you can teach these guys a lot, but at the same time...
'Yeah, listen, if I give them too much the effect will be counterproductive. So I feed them a little bit, a little bit, and try to sound not too pushy and then they might accept it. Because usually if you push something into somebody, they will not want it, they're not gonna listen. Now I have kids, I understand, you know (laughs).'

What kind of father are you? Are you...
'I'm a horrible father. I'm so bad, because I am always away from home. I don't spend too much time with my boys.'

Are you strict on them?
'Hell, no. Well, I'm a believer in discipline, but all those theories that my dad practised... There is a lot of modification that needs to be done.'

At this point he receives a message on his phone. He looks and says: 'Ah, that's my girlfriend... she called me six times.' A minute later he again takes his cell phone from his pocket: 'Give me a second, because I think she is trying to call me.' He calls her and they speak briefly in Russian. His tone is affectionate and he promises her that he will call her back after the interview and tells her that maybe she should go to sleep (in view of the 9-hour time difference with Moscow, where she is). After he's hung up he explains: 'She is following my games really closely. She follows all the live games, knows all the results, she looks at my videos. That's nice. Technically speaking she is not my wife, she's my girlfriend, but she is really close to being my wife. We are raising a kid together.'

And you feel that at this point you're at the best point in your life.
'Ah, the best point in my life? No, I'm not sure what the best point in my life is, I am in the process (starts laughing).'

On the road...
'Yeah, exactly, it never ends, you know, never. You have to discover and...'

At some point you quit chess and went to college. How do you see that decision in hindsight?
'That was a good decision. (Formulates carefully) Because it was the first step of trying to become happy. The first step of trying to understand myself. That was important to me. Because at that point I felt that I was not leading the life that I wanted. I felt that I needed to do something different, for a change. I think about Bobby (Fischer). The thing about Bobby was that he took chess as so exclusive for his life, it was all he could do. And, of course, that destroyed him in the end. I feel that chess is important. It's my work, it's my profession, what feeds me and I have to be good at it. And I love it, of course, because I can't live without it. I mean, when I quit chess I was still playing on ICC. I was playing every day. I was playing all those young kids like Grischuk and Nakamura and Aronian. Morozevich. We all played blitz marathons and I trained them really well, you know (laughs). They've become really strong players. Because we played like five or six thousand games each, and I was an elite player, Candidate level, with my understanding of chess. So I felt I gave them a lot. They may think differently, but that's my opinion. So I couldn't stay away from chess completely. I still loved it and that's why I came back.'

Have you ever considered working as a lawyer?
'Oh, sure. Sure, sure. I still might. I mean, once I quit chess when I am 40, which is part of my plan – I know people don't believe me, but it is still part of my plan – there are so many options open to me. There are so many things to do, it's like huge. But right now I need to focus on my chess. I just want to give it my all. I don't want to think, later in my life, damn I could have done better. No, I don't want to think like that.'

Is this part of the development you went through? That now you have this great hunger for life, to really get the best out of it?
'(Hesitates) What actually helped me, was that... There are sometimes critical points in your life, something happens, something horrible, something tragic, or something really nice, and they sort of actually force you to face what have you done up till now? How are you going to change it? A lot of people experience that after a near death experience. In my case, you know... (hesitates), I guess when my ex-wife passed away last year... I didn't talk about it much, but that's what happened, and that was actually a big thing in my life. That was something that made me think about it. And before that, of course, going through the divorce first. Things seem very different.'

It's a weird thing to say, but it was something so sad that helped you become happier.
'Yes, but it also forces you to think. And not just to sit and grieve of course, because you have to do something about it. If you want to make it worthwhile, that the sacrifice wasn't in vain, you feel sort of obligated to do something.'

At the press conference you briefly touched on the chess situation in the U.S. You said, now I am the strongest player in the whole United States, which of course was a slight jibe at Hikaru Nakamura. How do you think the situation is now? You worked together for some time...

'No, we didn't work together. We never worked together. We always competed and it was good that he appeared, because I was stagnating in my development. I felt no pressure, and he came and he burst through, and I always knew he would do that, and then it made me work harder. It made me change a lot of things. So actually it was very helpful, I am thankful to him for that. Of course we have differences of opinion on a lot of things. I feel we don't really get along that well, especially now that we are direct competitors. Obviously he is shooting very high, as he should, and I am still part of the game. We were like buddies before, now we're like really strong competitors, who are both really dominant. It's a whole different ball game. If I touch this stuff we can go on forever. Like in relationships, like the way you are in life, either you lead people or you are a follower. I feel that people like Hikaru, or anyone who is at the top of the list of doing something, is a leader, in character. And you know, when you have two leaders, they can't coexist! Right? That's how I see it.'

And it's a good thing.

'It's a good thing, it's competitive and it also explains things. People say, why don't you just get along? You're nice people, the world is a nice place, just get along! Be happy! Be friends! But sometimes you just can't, if you're a leader, only one gets to lead. You can't have two leaders riding the same horse.'

SAINT LOUIS CHESS CLUB

A grateful Gata Kamsky reacts to a round of applause at the prize-giving.

And the two of you are clearly the toughest here, aren't you?

'I don't want to say it like that, because Onischuk, Shulman, Robert (Hess) and Sam (Shankland), their levels are really very close to us. It's just that they didn't have the experience of playing the top top top level tournaments. Just playing there gives you this automatic feel. For the moves, for the game, for nuances. These guys don't have that.'

But now you're talking about something extremely essential.

'Yes, it is. I spoke with Rex (Sinquefield) and he was thinking about organizing a huge elite international tournament in Saint Louis. And I said, wow, you're absolutely right. If you want the guys to be elite players, you gotta do it.'

You are about to have another shot at the world championship. Are you serious that you might quit at 40?

'I'm not saying I might; I will quit. Yeah, I will quit at forty. It's done.'

And you already feel it as a relief that...

'Oh sure, sure. It makes me happy. One of the bad things about uncertainty is that you have no idea where you are. You are stuck in limbo and that's the most horrible punishment you can ever feel. So, once you clarify the situation... It's like chess, I like clarity, purpose, and once I have clarified it for myself, it's much easier for me to go. You have a goal in life, you follow it. If you don't have a goal in life, it's really hard to do anything. Because you have no idea what you are going to do next.'

For many players it would be a disaster. How can they give their all if they know they are going to stop anyway?

'For me that's different. Give it your best shot and go on and do something else. I am not going into politics, though (laughs for a long time).'

The next morning I run into Gata Kamsky at the diner next door to the Park Plaza Hotel, where the players stayed during the championship. Here he's had breakfast for the past fortnight. We chat only briefly, as he's almost finished eating. Before he leaves he walks up to the counter and profusely thanks the men and women there for their invaluable contribution to his tournament. He is all smiles and gives them all a high-five. With a last buoyant 'see you next years, guys!' he walks out the door. With hardly an expression on his face. Mission St. Louis has been accomplished. He's off to the Candidates' matches in Kazan. ■

Law and Order

Unlike tennis, cricket or football, chess is a sport that for the most part plays itself, without constant vigilance from umpires, referees and linesmen. Naturally, we cannot dispense with arbiters altogether, and from time to time they are called upon to make important decisions. The Preface to the Laws of Chess assumes that arbiters have the necessary 'competence, sound judgment and absolute objectivity'. In my experience, though, the clear majority of arbiters lack at least one, and sometimes all, of the above qualities.

Is it a coincidence that a high proportion of arbiters are, or at least were, schoolteachers? When you are dealing with a bunch of spotty teenagers, the most important thing is to be obeyed. Who cares whether you are right or wrong, as long as everyone does as he is told? In one notorious incident, in the Isle of Man, back in 2003, I was re-paired (!) immediately after winning my first round game on forfeit. Overcoming my initial shock, I asked the chief arbiter – who had first met me as a seven year old and who apparently still imagined me to be in short pants – to show me the relevant FIDE rule which permitted him to do this. Keeping the book firmly closed with his hand, he said that it probably didn't exist, but he was asking me to agree. He was firmly backed in this outrageous stance by his deputy – another schoolteacher. Facing a wall of official obduracy, I eventually quit the event in disgust. Bizarrely, I have received an extraordinary amount of abuse for this incident – particularly in the United Kingdom – and it even led to me being dropped by my club Wood Green. As the practice of repairing still rumbles on – particularly in Anglo-Saxon countries – and that at least one other very senior arbiter (another schoolteacher) maintains to this day that I was completely in the wrong, let me quote again from the Preface to the Laws of Chess:

'A member federation is free to introduce more detailed rules provided they:

a) do not conflict in any way with the official FIDE Laws of Chess, and ...

c) are not valid for any ... FIDE title or rating tournament.'

Default is, of course, an integral part of the Laws of Chess and the Monarch Assurance tournament in the Isle of Man was, naturally, FIDE rated, with title norms at stake – QED.

On the subject of default: everyone now knows it is essential to be seated at the start of play on pain of forfeiture. Or is it? Let's look at the relevant law:

'6.6 a) Any player who arrives at the chessboard after the start of the session shall lose the game. Thus the default time is 0 minutes…'

Let's suppose a player arrives 10 minutes early, fills in the scoresheet and, say, goes to the bathroom. The bell then signals the start of play. He has clearly arrived at the chessboard *before* the start of the session and therefore should not be defaulted, although I am willing to bet that in most cases he will. I await, with great interest, the first legal challenge here, because quite a number of players, including Hou Yifan, have lost vital games, despite their punctuality.

Laws tend to be written by arbiters for their own convenience. A number of them end with the words 'unless the arbiter rules otherwise' which, of course, means they are no real rules at all. Replacing them with 'Whatever the arbiter decides is right' would be more to the point, if less diplomatic. No attempt is made at enforcing consistency: the all-important article 13.4 states that an arbiter can impose penalties, for transgressions, varying from a warning all the way up until expulsion from the event. That is quite a spectrum of punishments. In essence, players are entirely at the official's mercy.

This would matter a lot less if arbiters could be trusted to implement simple decisions correctly, but they can't. I could give numerous examples of blunders, cowardice and ineptitude; a couple of relatively recent ones immediately spring to mind, from tournaments I have attended. A while back, at the prestigious Corus event, Radjabov knocked over the pieces in time-trouble against Smeets, to which his opponent, quite understandably, punched the clock back. Radjabov then failed to make his required 40 moves in time and was awarded a loss. The Azerbaijani protested. The arbiter, instead of upholding the result, as he should have done, prevailed upon Smeets to accept a draw, to which the Dutchman reluctantly agreed (a decision he subsequently regretted). Had Smeets been completely winning – as opposed to hopelessly lost – the absurdity of the arbiter’s actions would have been apparent to all. Arbiters, one would hope, are there to ensure that justice is done, not to enjoy an easy life by doing their utmost to avoid disputes.

A similar timidity and deference to people with high Elo ratings was found at Kolkata 2009, when Vladislav Tkachiev infamously fell asleep dead-drunk at the board. The arbiter not only tacitly encouraged various players to attempt (unsuccessfully) to wake him from his alcoholic stupor, but eventually took it upon himself to rouse him, before the Frenchman’s flag fell – thus knowingly flouting not one, but two separate FIDE laws (13.6 ‘The arbiter shall refrain from informing a player that his opponent has made a move…’ and 13.7 ‘Spectators and players in other games are not to … interfere in a game’. What was his justification? He had seen another arbiter advocate something similar, on a website, in a vaguely analogous but, in fact, different situation. That’s right: for some International Arbiters, blogs apparently take precedence over the Laws themselves.

In fairness, even the finest arbiters will occasionally make misjudgements, but serial incompetency ought to be eliminated. The problem is that currently, short of committing downright fraud – such as submitting fake tournament tables – no one is ever going to be stripped of his IA title, regardless of how bad he may be.

Fortunately, the beleaguered player can always seek to overturn a poor decision (or indeed a good decision) by calling upon the Appeals Committee (AC). Here, alas, we run into a very serious problem – a massive, gaping, regulatory hole that has not been addressed by the governing body of the game. You will search in vain for any mention of the AC in the Laws of Chess – you have to turn to FIDE Tournament Rules for that. Apart from some minor points, such as restrictions on age (they should be over 18) and nationality (no two members from the same country) there is practically no guidance at all. Previous criminal convictions or profound prejudice are apparently no bar to membership. It seems that no knowledge of the FIDE laws is required (I was once asked at the Asian Indoor Games in Macau, 2007, whether the ‘touch-move’ law was applicable in blitz) nor do committee members have to attend the event in question – except to convene and deliver their verdict. Shockingly, nothing is said about the Appeals Committee’s jurisdiction. Is it allowed to consider and judge upon any matter that is brought before it? Or should it only revoke a decision in case of a clear error by the arbiter? Your guess is as good as mine...

Is it a coincidence that a high proportion of arbiters are, or at least were, schoolteachers?

As if it were not bad enough that the higher court at tournaments and matches is completely unregulated, an already parlous situation is exacerbated by the pernicious practice of FIDE providing sinecures for its favoured few, by appointing members, rather than electing them. The Topalov-Kramnik ‘Toiletgate’ saga is a prime example of the sort of botch-up that can arise when political considerations start to impinge on decision-making.

Whilst I am at it, let me propose a couple of minor amendments to the Laws of Chess. What purpose is served by obliging people to write down their move before claiming a draw for three-fold repetition of position? The law has been in existence for as long as I have known it, but the requirement is unnecessary and ought to be abolished forthwith. A scoresheet is provided for the recording of moves played, not for the jotting down of intentions. A player should simply make the move, stop the clock and claim.

Secondly why – particularly when 30 second increments are in use – are players allowed to respond to their opponent’s move before writing it down? I once faced an opponent who bashed out 15 moves of Closed Spanish theory, never pausing to write down the moves – except when my clock was ticking. Stealing seconds in such a manner is unethical but totally legitimate as things stand.

The last word on this topic goes to Boris Spassky, who once remarked to me, in his witty manner, that a man may be permitted to have a mistress ‘according to the FIDE rules’. I am not entirely convinced that such a clause exists in the FIDE Handbook but, if it doesn’t, perhaps it should... ■

The golden years of Georgian women's chess were revived with festivities around the anniversaries of former World Champions Gaprindashvili and Chiburdanidze and the organization of the European Championship in Tbilisi. The championship was dominated by **Victoria Cmilyte.** The Lithuanian grandmaster had a raging start and recovered admirably from a loss against the ultimate runner-up Antoaneta Stefanova to claim the title. An impression by the new champion.

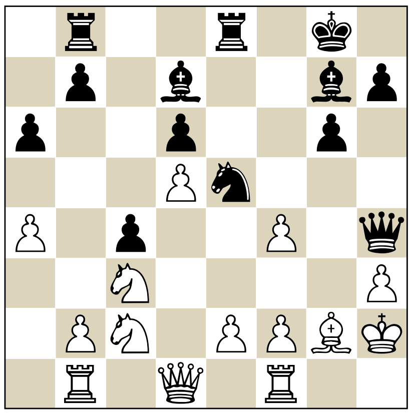
Originally, the 12th European Women Championship was scheduled to take place in Giazantep, Turkey. However, due to a controversy between the Turkish organizer and the ECU, it was decided to move the championship to Georgia, the country famous for its chess tradition and especially for its great women chess players. This year is a very special one for Georgian chess, as both the legendary ex-world champions Nona Gaprindashvili and Maya Chiburdanidze celebrate jubilees. Gaprindashvili, the sixth World Champion (1962-1978), celebrated her 70th birthday on May 3rd, while Chiburdanidze, her successor from 1978 to 1991, turned 50 on January 17th. Holding the European Women Championship was a logical next step, and the tournament was part of the bigger festivities.

The championship took place in the five-star Sheraton Hotel in the centre of Tbilisi. While the accommodation conditions for the participants varied (not all the players were staying in the Sheraton), the playing conditions were superb. Tbilisi is an exciting place to play chess, as one can feel that the local people have a genuine respect for the game. During every round there would be spectators following the games intensely. Both Nona Gaprindashvili and Maya Chiburdanidze were guests in the press room, along with Genna Sosonko, who was there to comment the games every day.

Nana Alexandria, another former top player (in 1981 she drew Chiburdanidze in a World Championship match!), was the chief arbiter of the tournament. She made sure that the participants had nothing to complain about, and whenever any small problem arose, she personally took care of it.

The field of the championship was impressive, with six of the world's top-10 players participating.

I started the tournament with five wins, beating rating favourite Nadezhda Kosintseva in Round 4 and Elina Danielian in Round 5.



Danielian-Cmilyte
position after 20...♕h4

This is the position after Black's 20th move. A g3-Benoni was played, in which I managed to solve my opening problems and got a promising position with some prospects on the kingside. I have just sacrificed my f5 pawn, hoping to develop an attack on the white king.

21.fxe5??

This loses on the spot. 21.e3 was necessary, when after 21...♘d3 22.♕d2 b5 could follow, with huge compensation for the pawn.

21...♕f4+!

White resigned in view of 22.♔g1 ♗xe5 23.♖e1 ♕h2+ 24.♔f1 ♗xh3. Elina must have been counting on 21...♗xe5+?, when after 22.f4 ♗xf4+ 23.♔g1 the position would be unclear.

Champion in the country of champions

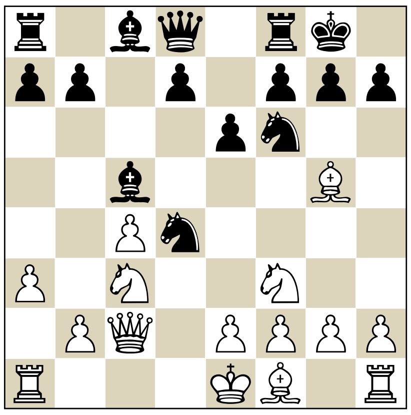
Elina quickly recovered after this loss and went on to have a great tournament. She won the bronze medal, a nice addition to the excellent results she has been having lately.

In Round 6 I lost against Antoaneta Stefanova, and with seven people sharing the lead, the race became very close again. I managed to recover by winning my next game and was lucky not to lose against local hero Bela Khotenashvili in Round 8. For most of the tournament Bela was in the leading group, showing great fighting spirit and pressurizing her opponents in most of her games. She ended in fifth place, the best result by a Georgian player, scoring 2 out of 3 against the medallists.

In Round 9 I faced Pia Cramling. I have played Pia a lot of times in various tournaments. However, our European Championship history is rather peculiar. In the previous years I twice finished second after losing to Pia. In 2003 after a tiebreak match for the gold, and in Rijeka last year she beat me in the last round of the championship and claimed the title. I was hoping history would not repeat itself, as there were quite some differences compared to our previous encounters. For a start I had white, and holding the lead in the tournament I was willing to play it safe.

NI 21.13 – E39
Victoria Cmilyte
Pia Cramling
Tbilisi 2011 (9)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 c5 5.dxc5 0-0 6.a3 ♗xc5 7.♘f3 ♘c6 8.♗g5 ♘d4

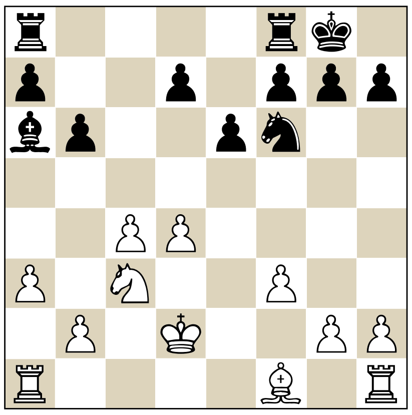


A solid move, occasionally used by prominent players like Vladimir Kramnik and Ulf Andersson.

9.♘xd4 ♗xd4 10.e3 ♕a5 11.exd4 ♕xg5 12.♕d2

The best reaction for White, which leads to a more pleasant endgame.

12...♕xd2+ 13.♔xd2 b6 14.f3 ♗a6



15.a4

A logical move, as a further a5 could make Black very uncomfortable. The alternatives include 15.♖c1 and 15.b4.

15...d5

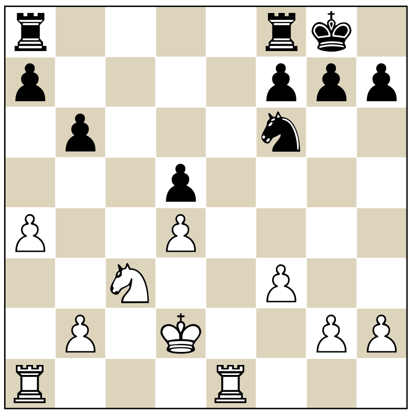
In case of 15...♖fc8 16.a5 ♗xc4 17.axb6 ♗xf1 18.b7 ♗xg2 the flashy 19.♖xa7 was possible, which after 19...♖ab8 20.bxc8♕+ ♖xc8 21.♖b1 ♗xf3 would lead to a complicated endgame. However, the simple 16.b3 was possible, keeping a pleasant edge.

16.cxd5 ♗xf1 17.♖hxf1 exd5

After 17...♘xd5 18.♘xd5 exd5 19.♖fe1 f6 20.♖ac1 White had an advantage in Narciso Dublan-Delis Ramos, Barcelona 2000.

During the game I thought Black should play 17...♖fd8 18.dxe6 ♖xd4+ 19.♔e3 ♖b4, when the activity of the rook could be just enough to compensate for the missing pawn.

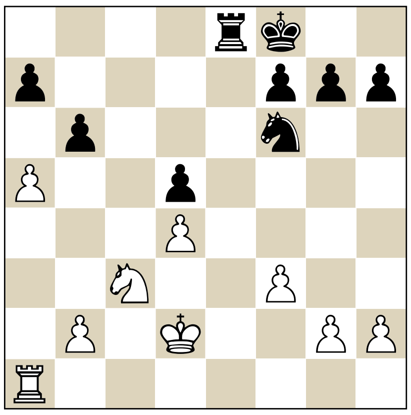
18.♖fe1



Under the watchful eye of ECU President Silvio Danailov the new champion was draped in a Lithuanian flag at the prize-giving. Before she gave her own speech, Victoria Cmilyte listened to others, seated in front row between Elina Danielian (3rd) and Antoaneta Stefanova (2nd).

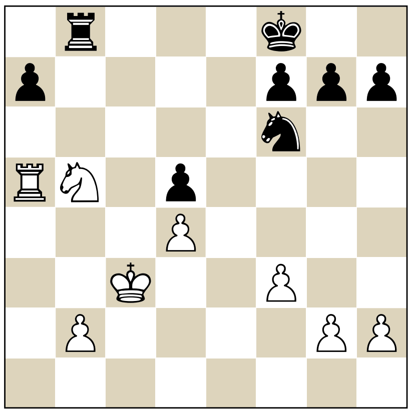
Here I was happy with the position. Black has to be very accurate, as any mistake could bring her to the brink of losing, while for White there's virtually no risk involved.

18...♖fe8 19.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 20.a5 ♔f8



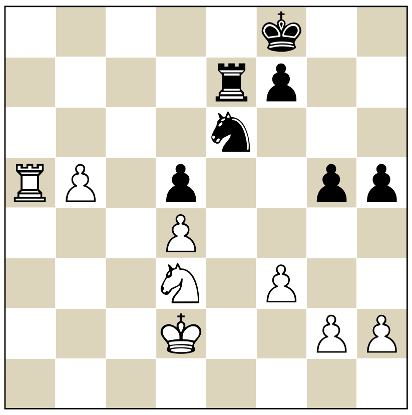
21.♘b5
21.a6 was an interesting option. Under no circumstances can Black afford to lose a7, so her rook will be tied to the defence. It seemed to me that White's position should be close to winning, but I couldn't find a way to strengthen it after the natural 21...♖e7 22.♘b5 ♖d7, with the idea of bringing the king to the centre. The straightforward 23.♖c1 can be met by 23...♘e8 24.♖c8 ♔e7, and in case of 25.♖a8 Black has 25...♘c7, parrying the immediate threats.

21...bxa5 In case of 21...♖e7, 22.axb6 axb6 23.g4 h6 24.h4 keeps Black under pressure.
22.♖xa5 22.♘xa7 was even better, as the a5 pawn will eventually fall.
22...♖b8 23.♔c2 ♖e8 24.♔d2 ♖b8 25.♔c3

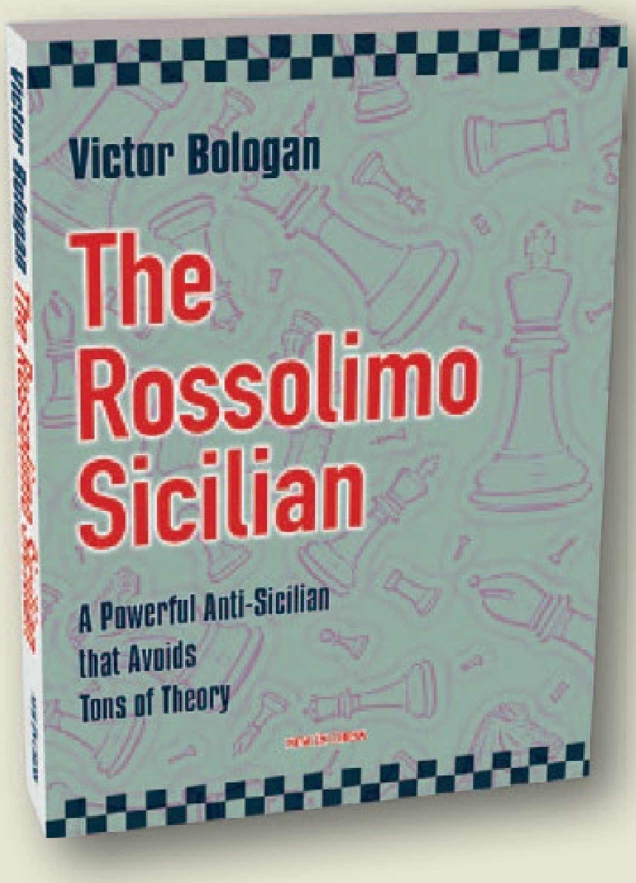


25...a6
A blunder. 25...♖c8+ was more testing. However, after the strongest reply 26.♔b3 ♖e8 27.♖xa7 ♖e2 28.♘d6 ♖xg2 29.♖xf7+ ♔g8 30.♖c7 ♔f8 31.♔a3 ♖xh2 32.b4 the b-pawn becomes very dangerous.

26.♘c7 ♖b7
The point is that after the natural 26...♖c8 27.♖c5 ♘d7? 28.♘e6+ follows, winning on the spot.
27.♘xa6 ♖e7 28.♔d2
28.b4 was possible.
28...h5 29.♘c5 g5 30.b4 ♘e8 31.♘d3 ♘c7 32.b5 ♘e6



33.♖a4?
There was no need to slow down. The straightforward 33.b6 was just winning: 33...♘xd4 34.♖a8+ ♔g7 35.♘c5, and the pawn is unstoppable.
33...♖b7 34.♖b4 ♔e7 35.♘c5



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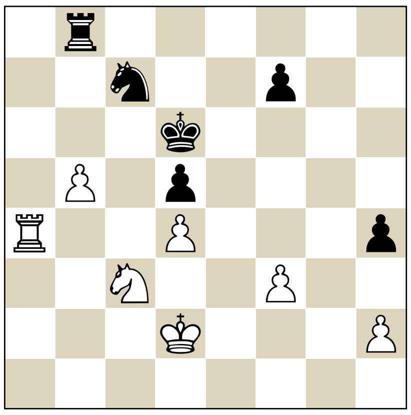
♖b6 36.♘a4 ♖b8 37.♘c3 ♔d6 38.g3 h4 39.gxh4 gxh4 40.♖a4 ♘c7



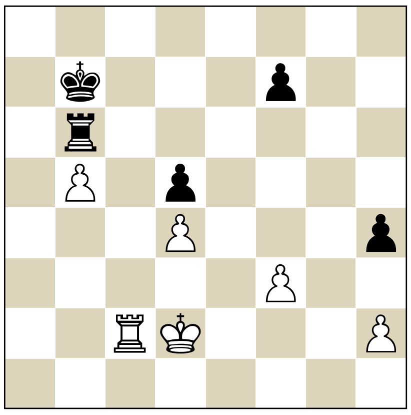
With the time-trouble over, I realized that I had wasted the lion's share of my advantage. Nevertheless, in a tense game like this it is always nicer to be the one with some chances for a win, as your opponent cannot afford to make a mistake.

41.♖b4 ♘a8 42.♘a4

I didn't like the idea of allowing the knight to a comfortable blocking square on b6. It also seemed to me that despite the drawing tendencies of the rook ending I would still keep some chances.

42...♘b6 43.♘xb6 ♖xb6 44.♖b2 ♔c7 Black wants to block the b-pawn with her king and activate the rook.

45.♖c2+ ♔b7

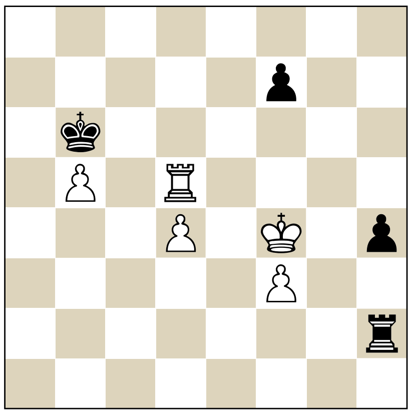


46.♖c5

I was pinning my hopes on this manoeuvre.

46...♖g6 47.♖xd5 ♖g2+ 48.♔e3 ♔b6 49.♔f4 ♖xh2

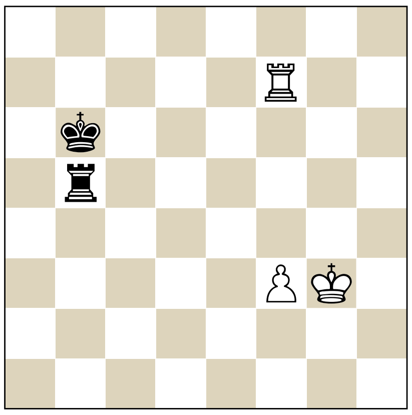
The h4 pawn becomes a factor, but my king is just in time to catch it. And although the position could still be a draw, I don't see a clear way for Black.



50.♔g4 h3 51.♔g3 ♖h1 52.♖f5 ♖d1 53.♔xh3 ♖xd4 54.♔g3

An unnecessary move. 54.♖xf7 ♔xb5 55.♖c7, cutting off the king, would win as in the game.

54...♖b4 55.♖xf7 ♖xb5



White is winning. With Black to move ...♔c6 would be the only move leading to a draw.

56.♖d7 ♔c6 57.♖d8 ♔c7 58.♖d4

With the black king cut off, the rest is trivial.

58...♖b8 59.f4 ♖g8+ 60.♔h4 ♔c6 61.f5 ♔c5 62.♖d1

Black resigned.

After this win the struggle for first place was still far from over, since Stefanova, Arakhamia and Lahno were only half a point behind. In Round 10 I beat Arakhamia in a very tense game, and a draw in the last round was enough to maintain a half-point lead and claim the title. Antoaneta finished clear second with 8½ points.

After the championship in Tbilisi the majority of the players moved on to Kutaisi to participate in the European Rapid Championship, which was won by Hoang Thanh Trang from Hungary. The Kutaisi event finished with a spectacular closing ceremony in the local opera house, where the players had a chance to congratulate Maya Chiburdanidze on her jubilee. ■

Tbilisi 2011

						TB (TPR)
1	Victoria Cmilyte	IGM	LTU	2504	9	2692
2	Antoaneta Stefanova	IGM	BUL	2506	8½	2637
3	Elina Danielian	IGM	ARM	2506	8	2629
4	Svetlana Matveeva	IM	RUS	2380	8	2413
5	Bela Khotenashvili	IM	GEO	2470	7½	2580
6	Kateryna Lahno	IGM	UKR	2530	7½	2565
7	Lela Javakhishvili	IM	GEO	2454	7½	2553
8	Tatiana Kosintseva	IGM	RUS	2559	7½	2539
9	Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant	IGM	SCO	2462	7½	2535
10	Anna Muzychuk	IM	SLO	2537	7½	2533
11	Cristina-Adela Foisor	IM	ROU	2414	7½	2490
12	Anastasia Bodnaruk	IM	RUS	2419	7½	2489
13	Natalya Pogonina	WGM	RUS	2448	7½	2383
14	Nadezhda Kosintseva	IM	RUS	2567	7	2513
15	Evgenya Ovod	IM	RUS	2404	7	2509
16	Pia Cramling	IGM	SWE	2468	7	2506
17	Marina Romanko	IM	RUS	2387	7	2487
18	Nino Khurtsidze	IM	GEO	2436	7	2456
19	Hoang Thanh Trang	IGM	HUN	2456	7	2452
20	Mariya Muzychuk	IM	UKR	2473	7	2439
232 players, 10 rounds						

Charles Hertan

Forcing Moves

The Priest and the Pariah

Two living legends of American chess lore illustrate the wide diversity of chess personalities. One is the old-timer you'd love to share a beer with, while the other could be a quite disagreeable, even nasty foe. A myth circulated for decades, that these talents left top-level play out of frustration at being eclipsed by Fischer's long shadow.

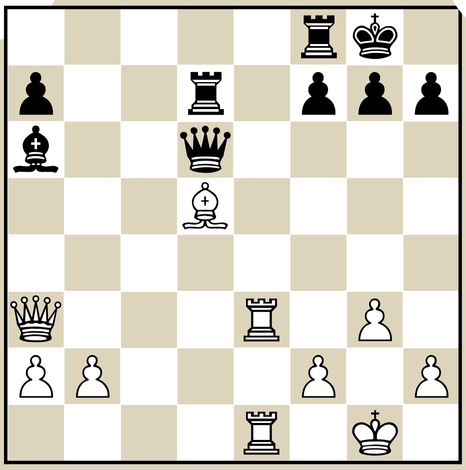
William Lombardy was a star prospect, the only player to win the World Junior with a perfect score. Placing 2nd to Fischer in the 1960-61 U.S. Championship, he qualified for the Stockholm Interzonal, but suddenly quit high-level chess to enter the priesthood. 'Bill' avoided the limelight but never left chess completely, and the thrill of hearing his cultured opinions on chess play and personalities, served with a hearty laugh and ironic wit, remained a highlight for generations of U.S. juniors.

Quite another matter is Bernard Zuckerman, a New Yorker of the same era. Another promising junior, his reputation as a theoretician earned him the nickname 'Zuck the book'. Fischer reportedly benefited from Zuckerman's encyclopedic opening knowledge, but altruism was never his calling card. An intimidating physical presence, Zuckerman was prone to temper tantrums and dubious antics at the board. Like Lombardy, he kept a low profile, but appeared several times after long lay-offs and still presented a formidable foe, tying for first at the 1976 and '78 World Opens.

Level of difficulty:
1-4 stars, 1 is 'easiest' and 4 'most difficult'.
The star rating refers to the difficulty of finding all the relevant variations, not just finding the right key move.

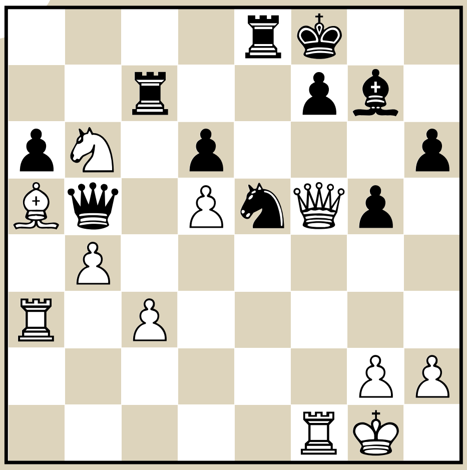
Solutions on page 98

1 ★⯪☆☆



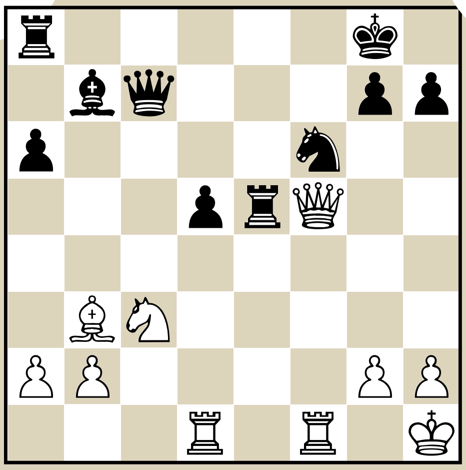
A neat trick
White to move and win

2 ★★⯪☆



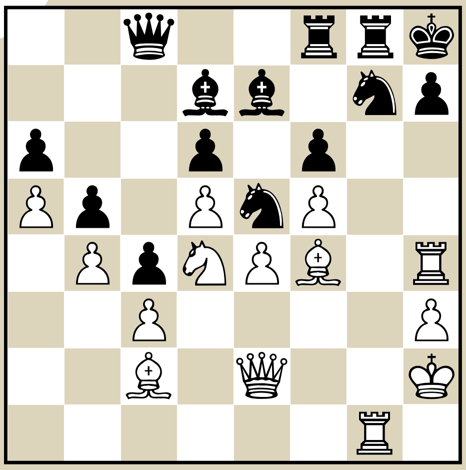
Press the initiative
White to move and win

3 ★☆☆☆



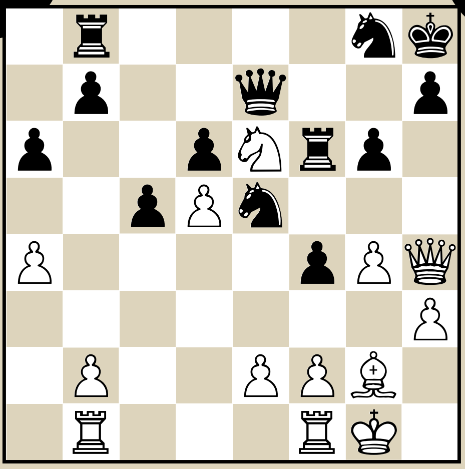
Simple chess
White to move and win

4 ★★⯪☆



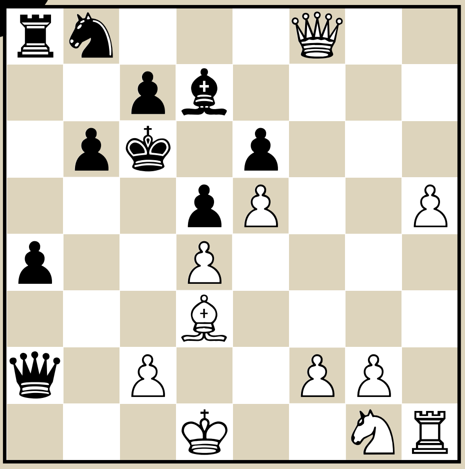
Space over matter
White to move and win

5 ★★☆☆

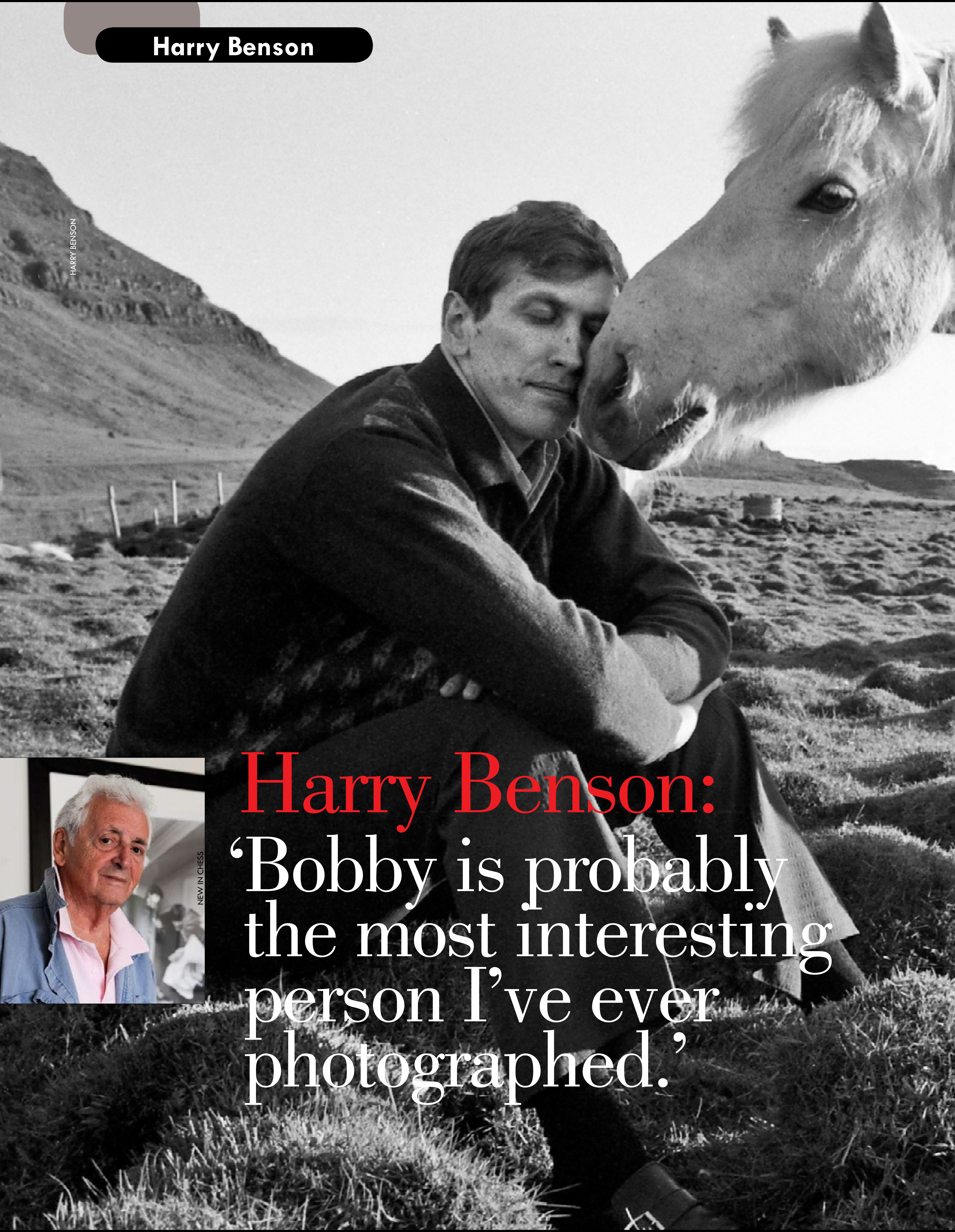


Trap the trapper
Black to move and win

6 ★★☆☆



Easy does it
Black to move and win

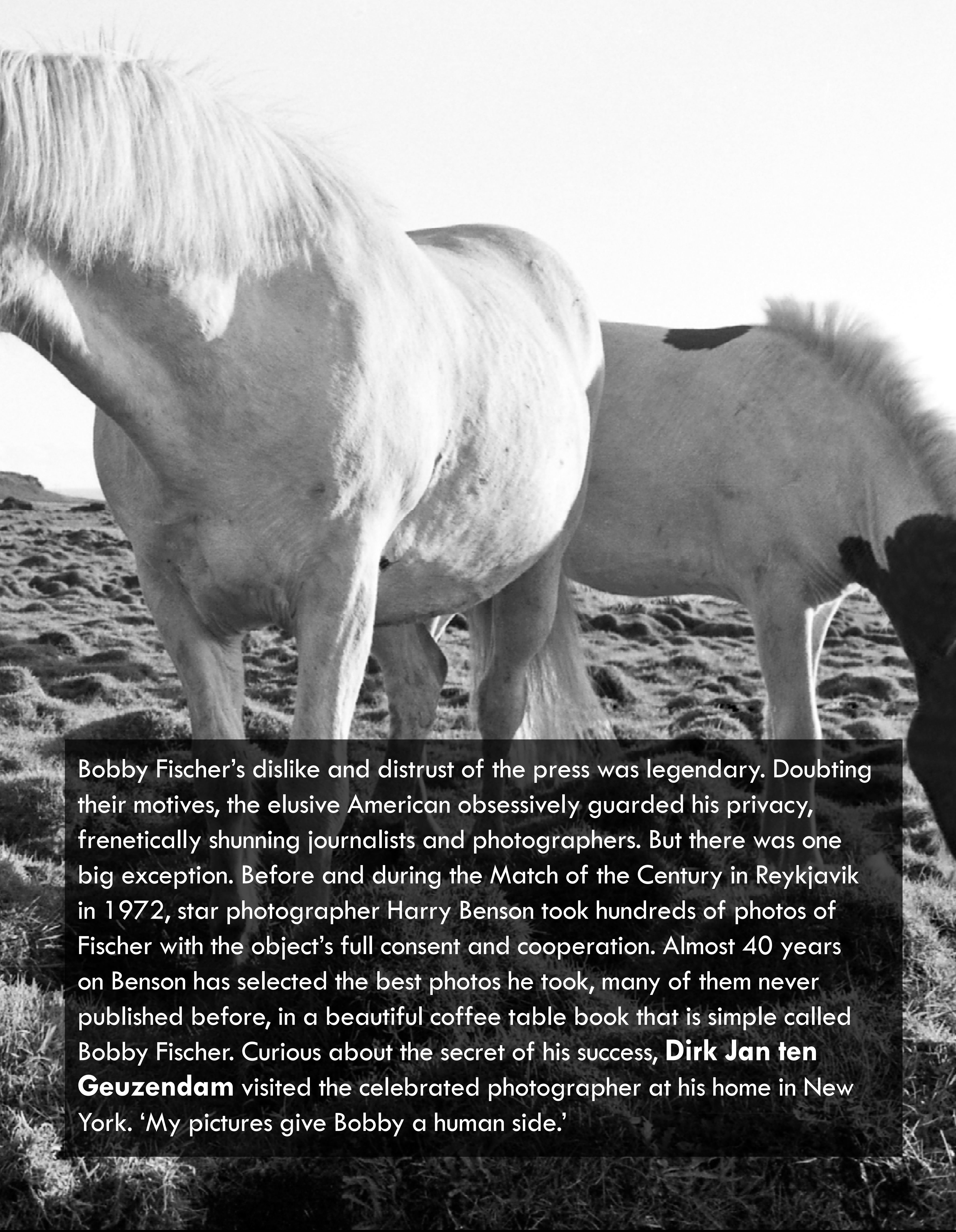


HARRY BENSON

NEW IN CHESS

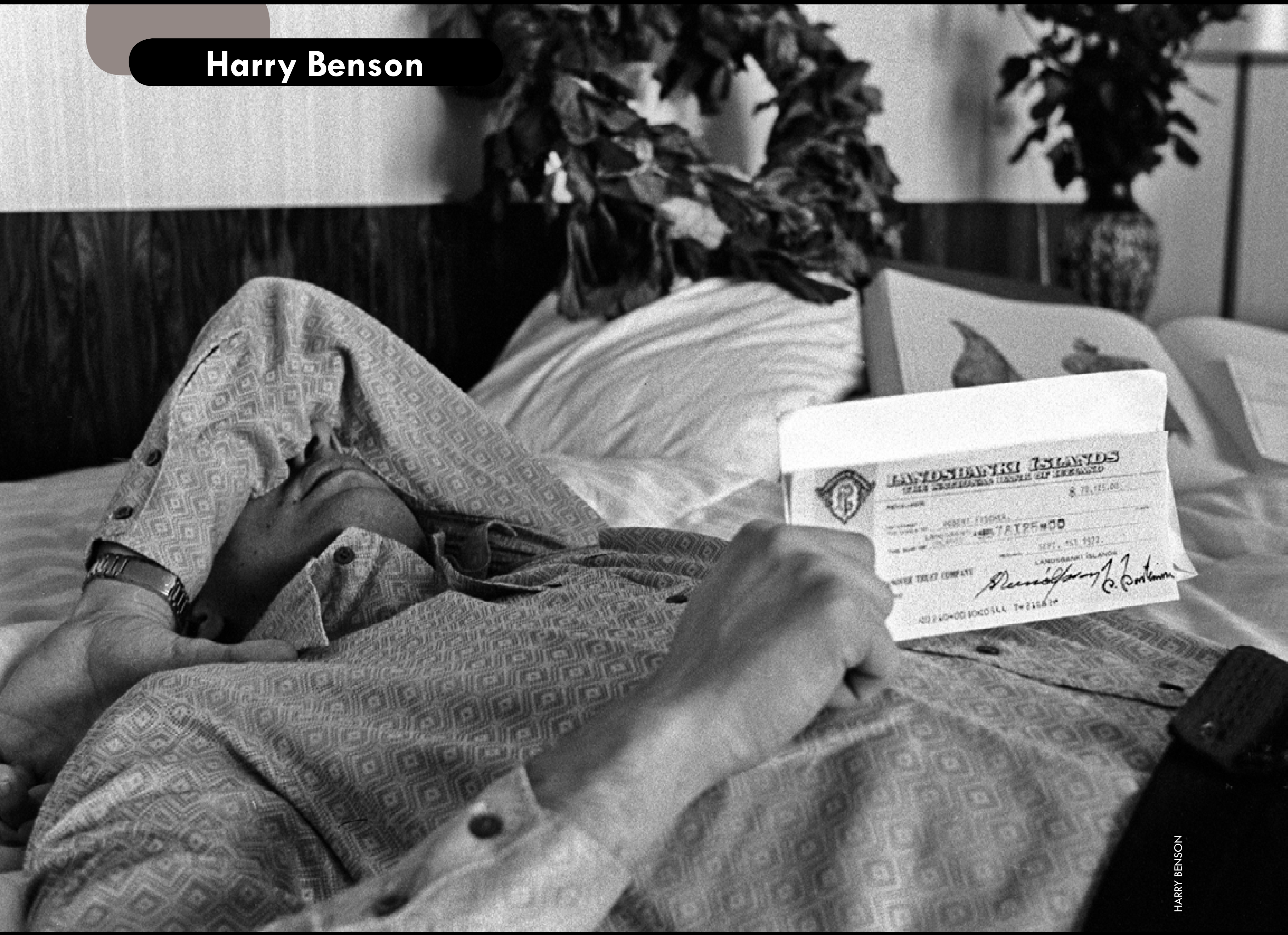
Harry Benson:

‘Bobby is probably the most interesting person I’ve ever photographed.’



Bobby Fischer’s dislike and distrust of the press was legendary. Doubting their motives, the elusive American obsessively guarded his privacy, frenetically shunning journalists and photographers. But there was one big exception. Before and during the Match of the Century in Reykjavik in 1972, star photographer Harry Benson took hundreds of photos of Fischer with the object’s full consent and cooperation. Almost 40 years on Benson has selected the best photos he took, many of them never published before, in a beautiful coffee table book that is simple called Bobby Fischer. Curious about the secret of his success, **Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam** visited the celebrated photographer at his home in New York. ‘My pictures give Bobby a human side.’

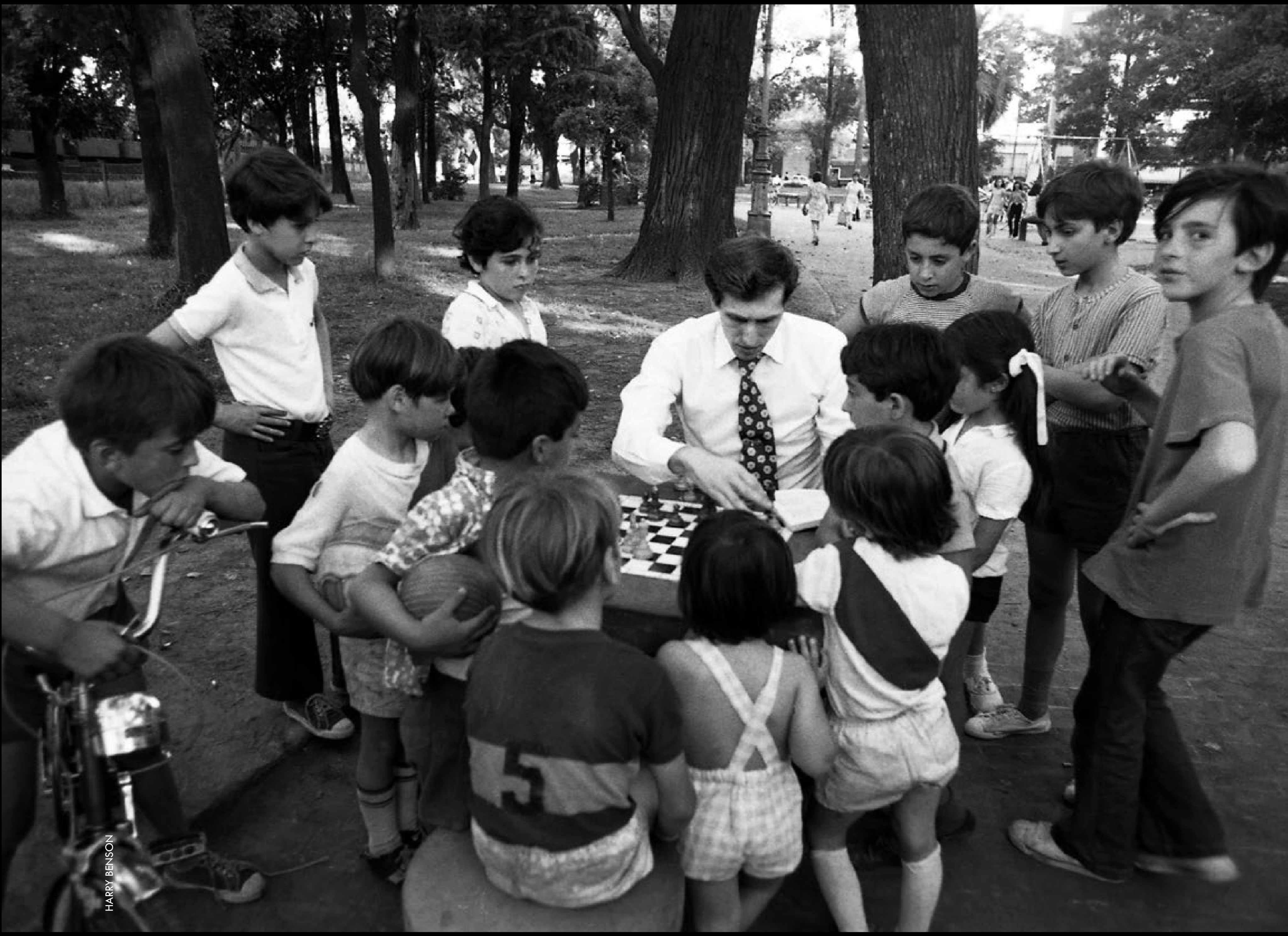
Harry Benson


HARRY BENSON

Reykjavik 1972. Bobby Fischer lies stretched out on his bed with the winner's cheque. The laurel wreath sits on the pillow behind him.

Although he has lived in the United States for several decades, his Scottish accent hasn't completely vanished. Occasionally his vowels remind you that Harry Benson hails from Glasgow, his native city that he paid tribute to three years ago with the wonderful book *Harry Benson's Glasgow*. The slight accent adds charm to his speech and perhaps makes him a little less imposing. Harry Benson is a tall man and his erect figure and lively eyes belie that he's reached an age where many others would choose a quieter life style. But it's not only his imposing presence and the relaxed but self-assured demeanour of a man who has seen it all that impresses, he is also one of the world's most famous photographers, who worked and works for magazines such as *Life*, *Vanity Fair*, *People* and *The New Yorker*. As the introduction to his chapter in the book *The Great Life Photographers* puts it: 'Many a photographer has trotted the globe. And many a photographer has shot the fabulous, the famous and the infamous. But then there is Harry Benson, singular among many.'

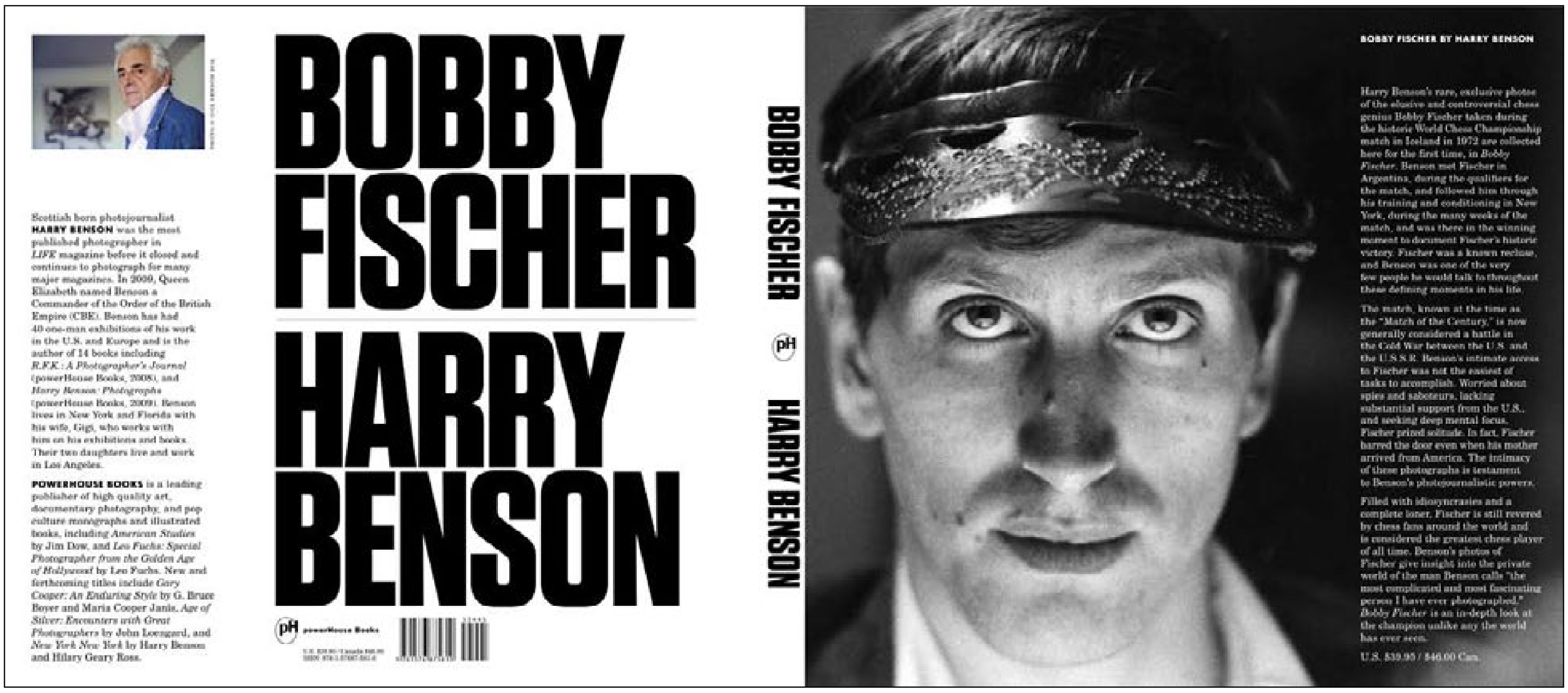
A double apartment on the 18th floor on the Upper East Side with a spacious roof garden, where he likes to sit with his dogs Oskar and Daisy, is testimony of his success. The side tables in the living room are filled with framed photos of the children and grandchildren of Harry and his wife Gigi, who might be called his manager if that weren't an undervaluation of the actual role she plays in the pro-



HARRY BENSON

Surrounded by children in Buenos Aires in 1971. 'Children couldn't harm him.'

The complete dust jacket of Harry Benson's *Bobby Fischer.*



Scottish born photojournalist **HARRY BENSON** was the most published photographer in *LIFE* magazine before it closed and continues to photograph for many major magazines. In 2009, Queen Elizabeth named Benson a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE). Benson has had 40 one-man exhibitions of his work in the U.S. and Europe and is the author of 14 books including *R.F.K.: A Photographer's Journal* (powerHouse Books, 2008), and *Harry Benson: Photographs* (powerHouse Books, 2009). Benson lives in New York and Florida with his wife, Gigi, who works with him on his exhibitions and books. Their two daughters live and work in Los Angeles.

POWERHOUSE BOOKS is a leading publisher of high quality art, documentary photography, and pop culture monographs and illustrated books, including *American Studies* by Jim Dow, and *Leo Fuchs: Special Photographer from the Golden Age of Hollywood* by Leo Fuchs. New and forthcoming titles include *Gary Cooper: An Enduring Style* by G. Bruce Boyer and Maria Cooper Janis, *Age of Silver: Encounters with Great Photographers* by John Loengard, and *New York New York* by Harry Benson and Hilary Geary Ross.

BOBBY
FISCHER
HARRY
BENSON

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BOBBY FISCHER pH HARRY BENSON

BOBBY FISCHER BY HARRY BENSON

Harry Benson's rare, exclusive photos of the elusive and controversial chess genius Bobby Fischer taken during the historic World Chess Championship match in Iceland in 1972 are collected here for the first time, in *Bobby Fischer*. Benson met Fischer in Argentina, during the qualifiers for the match, and followed him through his training and conditioning in New York, during the many weeks of the match, and was there in the winning moment to document Fischer's historic victory. Fischer was a known recluse, and Benson was one of the very few people he would talk to throughout these defining moments in his life.

The match, known at the time as the "Match of the Century," is now generally considered a battle in the Cold War between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. Benson's intimate access to Fischer was not the easiest of tasks to accomplish. Worried about spies and saboteurs, lacking substantial support from the U.S., and seeking deep mental focus, Fischer prized solitude. In fact, Fischer barred the door even when his mother arrived from America. The intimacy of these photographs is testament to Benson's photojournalistic powers.

Filled with idiosyncrasies and a complete loner, Fischer is still revered by chess fans around the world and is considered the greatest chess player of all time. Benson's photos of Fischer give insight into the private world of the man Benson calls "the most complicated and most fascinating person I have ever photographed." *Bobby Fischer* is an in-depth look at the champion unlike any the world has ever seen.

U.S. $39.95 / $46.00 Can.

motion and sale of his work. On the walls, here and in adjoining rooms, are some of the iconic photos that made him a star, including the amazing pillow fight, shot in the Hotel George V in Paris in 1964, of The Beatles, the band he next followed on their first US tour, on an impulse that turned out to be a golden decision. There's a colourful music band in Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, a sequence of Bianca Jagger together with Andy Warhol, and many more celebrities. On a table sits a huge Michael Jackson photo ready to be shipped to a customer. Actually it's hard to think of a celebrity from the glamorous world of show business, music or politics that he has not photographed. From Muhammad Ali to Liz Taylor, from Sharon Stone to Amy Winehouse, from Queen Elizabeth via Winston Churchill to Princess Diana, he's photographed them all, including all American presidents from John F. Kennedy onwards. When I ask him if there is someone he feels is lacking in his collection, he thinks for a while and then suggests Vladimir Putin. But only if he could do it in his manner and for instance follow the Russian leader on one of his hikes in wild nature. 'I don't like studio stuff because it's manipulated. You can go back and do five minutes, ten minutes, ten months, do the same picture. It's not a great picture.'

In the dining room hangs a photo of Greta Garbo drying herself with a towel on a beach. Not knowing the history of the photo, that turns out to be taken in Antigua in 1976, I ask in amazement how he got permission from the famously reclusive movie star to take that picture? He grins, 'I didn't. It only ruined her holiday when she came back and found out the pictures had been published.'

And then there is the reason why I've come to visit him. That reason is the Greta Garbo of chess, Bobby Fischer, whose publicity shyness and hate of photographers and inquisitive journalists was as legendary as that of the film star. Harry Benson took hundreds of photos of Fischer and the amazing thing is that he did so with the full consent and cooperation of the American chess genius. An experience that he remembers fondly: 'Bobby is probably the most interesting person I've ever photographed.'

For Powerhouse Books Benson has collected his best Fischer photos in an attractive coffee table book that is simply called Bobby Fischer. Gigi Benson shows me the book on her laptop, as at the time of my visit the book is being printed. Many of the photos have been seen before, many of them are published for the first time. It's a fascinating collection, a treat for everyone interested in Bobby Fischer or photography.

> H
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> 'He liked to eat alone. I don't mean to say that he was rude, but he ate like a pig.'

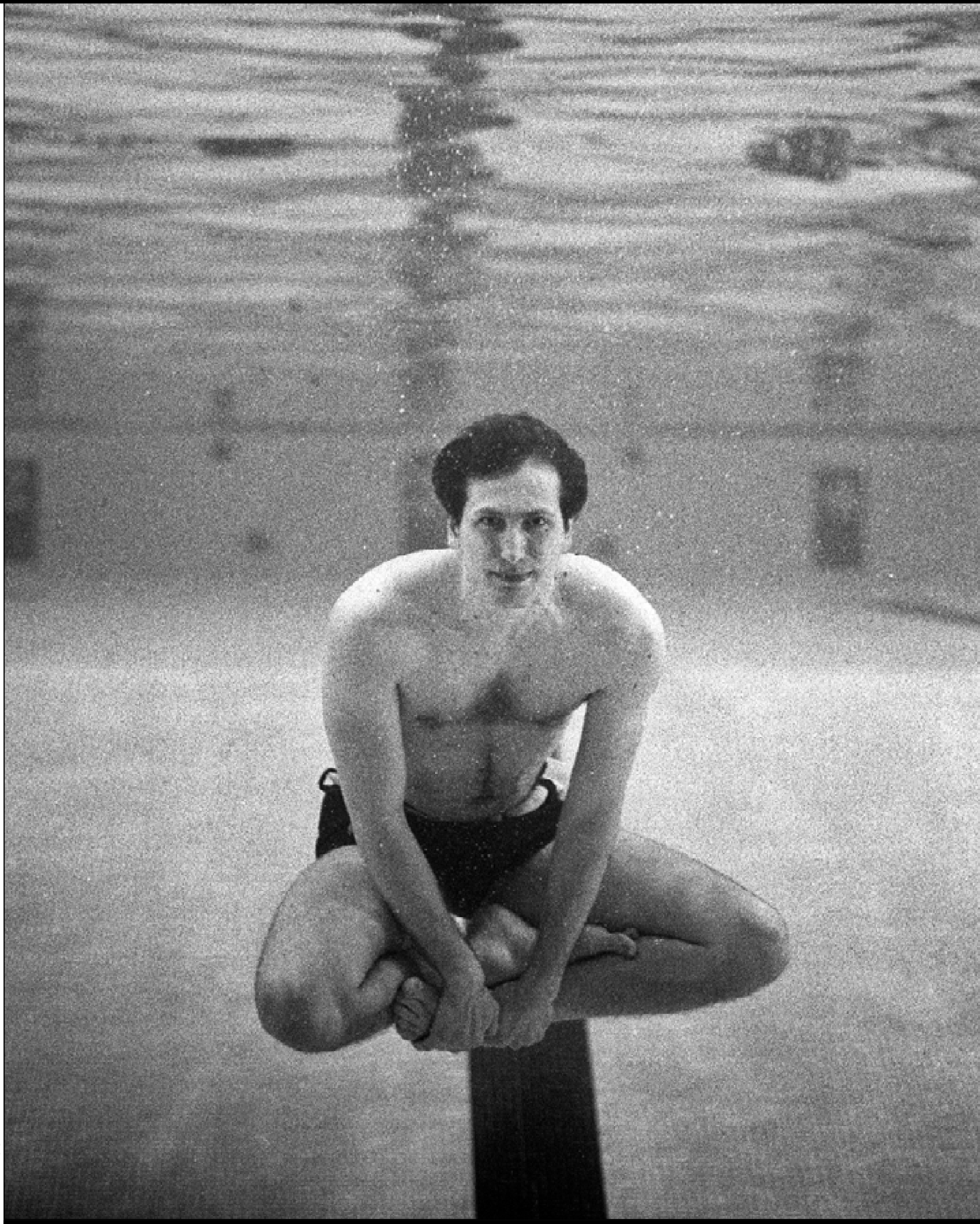
After we've been supplied with tea and cookies, Harry Benson, comfortably ensconced on the sofa, is ready to answer questions. Sometimes he chooses direct answers, sometimes he opts for a small detour when suddenly a memory crosses his mind. When he quotes Bobby Fischer he drops the tone of his voice and often speaks languidly. More than once you can see that these attempts to imitate Fischer amuse him as they bring the memory closer.

The first time he met Fischer was in Buenos Aires, in 1971, where he went together with journalist Brad Darrach, for a cover story for *Life* about the match against Petrosian.

'I was introduced to him in an elevator in the hotel. It was amicable. Harry Benson, I'm from *Life*. I want to take photographs of you. "Oh yeah, yeah", the way Bobby would talk. Then I couldn't get through to him in his room, to talk to him, go out with him. But I am having a late dinner and he comes out of the elevator and starts to walk. I said: "Bobby, I'd like to come walk with you. I have to run up to my room and get my cameras." And he waited. We walked and he didn't say a word. Walking, walking. I say to him: "Do you walk at night?" (Abruptly) "Yeah." "How long do you walk? For an hour?" Really no conversation. Nothing. Then he said to me: "What other stories do you do?" And I said: "Well, this time I am doing a story on President Nixon and the White House." And he goes, "Huh?" Something like that. I said: "I am also doing one on the New York Jets", the football team. The best thing I could have said. "Yeah?" He wanted to know everything. He wanted to know about their training and he says: "You know, I'm like a football player. I'm an athlete, I got to train." I told him I was a friend of Joe Namath, the quarterback, a local hero at the time in America. He was part of the story. And Bobby wanted to hear every part of it. He wanted to hear about boxing, and he was talking all the time. Then, at night, Bobby would knock at my door, "Let's go." More questions. Then he would sit down on a bench and sit by himself. "My favourite seat, Harry", he would say. Beside a monument in Buenos Aires. In the morning he would come and get me for breakfast. (Abruptly) He liked to eat alone. I don't mean to say that he was rude, but he ate like a pig. Six eggs… (laughs) shovelling them in. But all the time I am photographing him. I'm doing my job, you know. And he didn't mind, not at all. He liked the idea that I was a *Life* photographer and that I could talk of things. That suited me to talk about them (laughs), that's my business, I told him everything.'

The next time they met was at Grossinger's, the legendary resort hotel in the Catskill Mountains, where Fischer went before his match with Spassky to train physically. 'I stayed three or four days with him. I photographed him swimming there. I also photographed him swimming under water. And boxing. Table tennis, tennis. In the sauna. He liked the idea of Grossinger's, because this was the place where the great heavy-weight champions of the world would train. Like Rocky Marciano, Jersey Joe Walcott, Joe Louis, the greatest. He knew the history of it. "I'm gonna be prepared", he said, "If you've got to do it you must be prepared. Because you lose pounds of sweat and energy at the table, when you're face to face. They're not going to wear me out." His body wasn't bad. It wasn't a great looking body, but it was certainly a very strong body. In fact one of the trainers out there remarked on it.'

While at Grossinger's Fischer told Benson when he was going to arrive in Reykjavik. At that point Benson didn't pay too much attention, but the date that Fischer had mentioned came back to him when the entire world was waiting for the American to turn up in Iceland and the opening ceremony took place without him. When after various postponements Fischer finally landed in Reykjavik, Benson suddenly remembered what Fischer had said to him weeks before. 'That was funny. I said to Brad Darrach, you know, this is a day after Bobby said he was coming. He told me up in Grossinger's, where he was training! He gave me a date, I wrote it down. They're all searching, where is he? I said to Brad, but this is what he said! (laughs) He's a day late!'



HARRY BENSON

Fully cooperative, Bobby Fischer let himself be photographed by Harry Benson under water in the pool at Grossinger's.

Most of the photos in his book Harry Benson took during the match in Reykjavik. As he was still working on the stories about Nixon and the New York Jets too, he'd be in and out of Iceland dividing his attention as well as he could. In the White House he told Nixon about Fischer and the American president expressed his interest 'to meet that young man, for he is doing a good job.' Henry Kissinger reacted in a similar vein. Benson told Fischer, but he wasn't too impressed ('Yeah, yeah.') He knows about the story that allegedly Kissinger phoned Fischer to tell him to play. 'He might have done that, but Bobby made no reference to me that he called.' Fischer seemed to be more interested in other Americans, the players of the New York Jets. 'When I went back to do more on the Jets, I'd be away for a few days, he'd say, oh get me a picture of them. So on the day I am going the Jets, or some of the squads, were not training. And I was going to take a picture so I could take it to him. But I got an old picture and I signed it myself, saying, Go get them, Bobby! And he had it in his room.'

Such chauvinistic support gave Fischer a boost and it is for this reason that Benson remains puzzled by the attitude of the American embassy during the match. 'Nobody from the embassy ever sent him any flowers, no fruit, no cheese, nothing like a basket. It hurt his feelings. He was alone. As far as I know he never was asked out for dinner by any of them. He hinted at it. “I’m not getting any attention. If I were a Russian, you know, they would…” But he didn’t want self-pity. O, how terrible, that would be the worst you could say to him. I think that added up to his spitting on the Treasury Department letter in Yugoslavia and all that. That feeling of not getting his due for what he did in the heat of the Cold War.’

He reacts in surprise when he is asked what equipment he used in 1972. He had Minolta cameras with him, which were easier to carry than the heavy digital bodies and lenses that you see today. The films he sent to New York to be developed. ‘I took some colour photos, but not much. It was a black-and-white story. It was a news story, I didn’t want him to stand around, taking meters and temperatures and all this. I wouldn’t have gotten half of what I got. And what’s wrong with black and white? It’s still good. And I am glad that I did it in black and white, because let’s face it, forty years ago colour film was shit. That *Life* cover from Buenos Aires, it would have been better in black and white. There was a softness about Ektachrome. And you always had that bluish tint on it, you know green something. They wanted me to do it in colour, but I said that it was a black and white story. That the atmosphere in Iceland was blue, I made that up, that was all bullshit.’

When Harry Benson was in Iceland the routine was very much the same as it had been in Buenos Aires. He’d go for nocturnal walks with Fischer, although this time the sun would not set and it was light during the night, and they’d go for breakfast together. The chess champion had come to appreciate the presence of his compatriot so much that he was happy to have him around at almost any time of the day. He’d even be in his room when Fischer took a nap. ‘He would never say anything like, must get some sleep now, he’d just doze off. And ten minutes later he could wake up again.’ The conversation would invariably centre around topics that Fischer wanted to talk about. At regular intervals he’d talk about the Russians, how they would cheat. ‘He hated them. He may have gotten along with some of them, but he definitely didn’t want to fraternize with them. It would be a quick smile from Bobby with respect, but I never saw anything more. He thought they were all KGB. And he probably was right. You know, things have come out now that they were KGB. I know they were photographing in Buenos Aires as well as in Reykjavik, taking pictures of him and me and Brad. I did hear that Russia’s largest embassy outside Washington was in Reykjavik. It was in the North Atlantic, it’s the Cold War, you know. He would say things to me like “Spassky is making himself out to be a real good guy. Well, he’s not.” The one he had a nice word for was Nei, an Estonian. He liked him. In fact Nei was alright. He would come over and speak to me in Iceland. He was a nice and friendly individual, the rest weren’t. When we were walking at night, in the midnight sun, it was not unusual for him to stop and say: “Harry I am gonna crush them! I’m gonna crush them!” And then he’d laugh, you know. That was a joke, but he wasn’t joking.’

> ‘We went out to a farm and there were dogs and Bobby kissed them right on the lips, the dogs licking him.’

While they were going for walks, or no matter what they were doing, Fischer would not mind being photographed. Or, in any case, he never objected. ‘That’s right. You know, it’s hard for me to be critical of him. It’s very hard to be critical of somebody in our business who allows us to do our job. And Fischer did open the door to me. No, never once did he ask me to stop. He may have wanted to do that, but he might have felt a bit embarrassed to do it. I think a lot of Bobby’s problem was he got embarrassed and did not know how to handle it. Does that make sense? Like someone would come over and it was easier for him to be rude and walk away than to tackle that. He was good with children, loved children. Not in any kind of creepy way. Open, smiling. Children couldn’t harm him. I’ve seen the same with Sonny Liston, the boxer. I mean, he was an animal with people, the worst. But children? And Bobby with animals. When we were out walking in the night, it must have been three in the morning and we sat down somewhere and there were a lot of wild horses. And they’re coming closer and closer. And there is a white horse and it’s not coming towards me, but towards Bobby. So I move away. Have you seen the picture? That’s my favourite photo from Reykjavik. This was a photo… he was getting no love anywhere else. And right away the horse comes and Bobby is kissing it and rubbing its cheek. And Bobby would say things like: “Harry, Harry, he likes me. I won’t get a disease from it?” I said, no Bobby. We’d go a few nights and the same horse would come over. Then we would go again and the horses had disappeared. And as we walked away Bobby would turn around and look. You knew he was looking, but he didn’t want to say.

‘And if we passed a farmer, and he

had a dog, you know with the sheep, Bobby would kiss the dog in the lips. The first time I saw that was down in Argentina. We went out to a farm and there were dogs and Bobby kissed them right on the lips, the dogs licking him. Animals came to him, that was very interesting, you know.'

As he not only got along fine with Bobby Fischer, but also managed to deal with a long list of stars that can have their temperaments and whims it's tempting to suggest that Harry Benson has a perfectly tuned psychological antenna. Tempting as it may seem, he is not so sure. 'I don't know. Basically he was treating anyone else badly and you knew that could be you in an instant. This is a story I am on and it's my job to get as close as I can to my subject, my victim, whatever. I know if I'm going to talk about the Jets, sport, and not in a confrontational way, it's going to be a pleasant, who-cares conversation. That makes him feel comfortable. Because the last thing he wanted to talk to me about when he came back from the game was chess. The grandmasters would come in and he would treat them like… shit. You know that, he was treating them rude. "Yeah, yeah, yeah", he would go and really send them away. And Bobby would go, "Morons". He was rude to them. He hated Lombardy. Lombardy hates him. He said: "Lombardy depresses me." Lombardy was going for a walk and asked him to come along for a walk. "OK", Bobby said, "We're leaving at one o'clock." And Bobby would leave at 12."

Fischer's rudeness is vividly described in Brad Darrach's book *Bobby Fischer vs. The World*, a fascinating fly-on-the-wall account of the match in Iceland. When I visited Reykjavik a couple of weeks after Fischer's death (see New In Chess 2008/2) one of the questions I asked the people who had been involved in the match in 1972 was about the truthfulness of the book. The most revealing answer came from the organizer of the match, Gudmundur Thorarinsson, who stated without the least doubt that 80 per cent of it was true. Benson agrees with that assessment. His first inclination is to give an even higher percentage, but then rightly stresses that 80 per cent is a lot. 'Brad did a terrific job with him, meaning that he had the only story that meant anything. I know that. He's the only one of reporters that Bobby would talk to. Then for a while I was the only one he spoke to. I mean, really spoke to. But Brad Darrach did a great job. Bobby trying to leave one day with the car and me unplugging the car so he couldn't, that's in the book. All that is true. And the way he treated people. An American friend who had flown over… People would come all the way and Bobby would just go, hi. Completely cut off. Someone would knock on the door and bring a cake. "Yeah, thanks." And he'd throw the cake in the wastepaper basket.'

Another unique photo: Harry Benson 'plays chess' with Bobby Fischer.

Most probably Fischer also recognized a lot of truth in the book. He was highly unhappy with it and even sued Darrach. 'Brad made a fatal error with it. This would be about the last week in Iceland, he gave Bobby a sign that he would not publish a book unless it was okayed by Bobby. I said: "Brad, you're off your head, don't give it to him! You've got the story!" "Oh no, I must, Bobby wants it." A big mistake on Brad's part, he signed it. I told Brad: "If he asked me for one he's not getting it". (Laughs) That would be hellish, all that walking for nothing.' With a smile he adds that Darrach could have even scored higher than 80 per cent. 'He could have mentioned Bobby looking for girls. Yes, I think he was successful. But I wasn't in the room with him (laughs). He went to them. Not many times, but it happened. Spassky was there all the time, that's why they brought his wife in at some moment, someone told me. But Bobby wasn't lecherous… But mostly he liked the children. He'd sit in a bathing pool, a hot tub, he'd be surrounded by children. I've got the pictures. It wasn't an awkward moment.'

In his privileged position, Benson was bound to invoke the anger and jealousy of his colleagues. How frustrated they must have been by Fischer's uncooperative and dismissive attitude, while one of them got everything he wanted and more. Benson says there is a story that is 'pretty awful' and that he is 'not proud of', but as he tells it he leaves little doubt that it is a fond memory. 'They weren't getting nowhere. They were getting nowhere, because Bobby thought they weren't respectful enough. They would swear in front of him, Bobby hated that. There'd be about five of them, photographers and teams. They would literally surround him, you know. And Bobby saw to it that he got away.

'There is this story. We had breakfast. After a walk we'd get back at 3.30, 4 in the morning. And at 7 o'clock he would knock on my door and we'd go to breakfast. That doesn't mean that I was sitting with him, he just liked to have me downstairs. Bobby would go straight to the buffet and get eggs and everything piled up and coffee, and go right to the back, and sit there facing the wall. This morning there must be about six of them, two reporters, four photographers. From magazines like *Newsweek* and *Sports Illustrated*. They come to me and they wanted to know why he was talking to me and not them. I said, you are too uptight with him. You want to tell him a joke. Maybe a dirty joke, you know, be more easy. Anyway, they go round Bobby and they form a semi-circle around him. I am watching it. Then I see Bobby stiffening, standing up, getting his stuff, putting it on the tray and coming over to my table and saying: "Harry, Harry, the language, the language!" (laughs) I'd given them all the wrong information, you know. I wasn't going to hand it over to them! I worked in London, Fleet Street… "Harry, Harry! The language!" I said to Bobby: "I know, some people in our business are an embarrassment." It's the first time I tell that story, it's not a nice story. But that's what happened.'

A story he did tell before, it appeared in *The New York Times* at the time, is that he was the one who told Fischer that he was the new World Champion. 'I was the first to hear about it and it was just by coincidence. I went to photograph Spassky at the Saga Hotel. I took a lot of photos of Spassky, but Bobby was the centre. He's American and he is the one causing all the turmoil. And I am not going to mess up my position by showing an interest in the other side. So I arrive at the Saga Hotel and Spassky is leaving at the reception with his number one man, Krogius. They're leaving to go for a walk. And Spassky says to me: "Harry, there is a new champion of the world. It's Robert James Fischer." So straightaway I get in my car and go to the Loftleidir. I go to Bobby's room and I say: "Bobby, let me be the first to congratulate you, you are the champion." He didn't jump with joy. He was careful. He said: "I believe you, but there is a possibility that the Russians are up to some tricks." Something like that, he hated them. He said: "I've been analysing this. I am better, but if Spassky could do a few things, it could have been a draw. That's what he said to me. So, he wasn't sure until he heard, when he turned up and Spassky wasn't there.'

One of the most dramatic and fascinating photos in the book is one of Fischer after the prize-giving ceremony where he has been crowned World Champion. The new champion is lying on his bed, he shields his eyes with his arm, in the other hand he is holding the winner's cheque, and behind him, against the wall, is the laurel wreath. With our knowledge now it's a photo full of drama. Everything he has fought for all his life has been accomplished. He has won the highest title, earned more money than any chess player before him, the future is his. The future could have been his, but it became a future that no one could have predicted at that point. From our perspective it is hard to believe that the photo was not orchestrated. It was not. Once again it was Harry Benson, just being around, grabbing his chances. 'Bobby would always stretch out and shut his eyes. That was Bobby's way. And he could fall asleep. It wasn't the first time I had been with him when he lay down. Out in the wild he'd fall asleep. He would just go down and lie. He was asleep and then up again. This moment was the end of everything. My feeling is, and

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I'm not going to be coy about it, I knew I'm in the middle of a big story. And I'm the only one he's talking to, basically. I knew, this is it.'

Once again we get to talk about his unusual talent to get photos that leave the viewer wondering how he managed to get them. He remains reluctant to attribute to himself special psychological techniques, but as we delve into the matter he does reveal some of his philosophies and strategies when taking photos. 'I didn't manipulate Bobby. My photography is that I want people to be what they are, not what I think they are. You know what I mean? It all depends on what kind of attitude you've got. It's your business. And the camera will do everything I tell it to do. Really.

'You go with an idea. You go with something, but you're really hoping that something goes wrong. Not what goes right, what goes wrong. It's only when it goes wrong when it's interesting. It's photographs like Bobby holding that chess board, that's fine, that's what we sent you for, but that's not what they really sent me for. I got him with children and I got him walking, and by night. And going to an amusement park and going on children's roundabouts. When you're working, you're concentrating, you're watching your subject like a dog, it is very predatory in a way. You're not taking your eyes off your victim. Don't get me wrong, I am not going out to debunk people, to harm them. My pictures give Bobby a human side.'

After the match in Reykjavik the contact between Harry Benson and Bobby Fischer didn't completely evaporate, but it became very irregular. 'He would phone me in the middle of the night, usually from Los Angeles, and he'd say to my wife, tell him it's his friend Bobby Fischer. I met him in LA a few times when I went out there to do jobs. To me it was still the same old Bobby. This was in the late 70s. He was staying in some religious place in Pasadena, creepy. I was doing other things that he wanted to know about. Basically I was talking through my photographs of what I had done. I could show them to him. So I had a ground and I would never ask him anything threatening. He would mention the Russians, but he'd usually laugh about them.'

M

'My photography is that I want people to be what they are, not what I think they are.'

Benson also went to Sveti Stefan, when in 1992 Fischer and Spassky played a second match, but his heart was not in it. 'I could see that it was a very tense situation. And I found out this guy was a crook, the guy who organized it. He was a bad guy. I only spent a couple of days there. We spoke, but I'd lost interest in it. It was no longer a big story, you could see Bobby slipping. And he was surrounded by a bunch of thugs. There were no walks. I took photos, but not great ones.'

The last time he spoke to Fischer was a couple of months before his death. 'Another call in the middle of the night. My wife answered the phone, passed it on to me and went back to sleep. Bobby wanted to talk about nuclear catastrophes and we talked for about an hour.'

From everything he says it is clear that Harry Benson never lost sight of his professional aims whenever he was around Fischer. At the same time it seems equally clear that his memories are pleasant. Summing up, was he fond of Bobby Fischer? 'Yes, yes. As I said, it's very hard to be critical of somebody that allows you to do your job. I don't think that Bobby was as crazy as people say. I think it was easy for people to say it was mental problems, because he wouldn't talk to them. A lot of people thought they had a deal and they had no deal. He never said thank you and then you're looking back and they were using Bobby for something else.

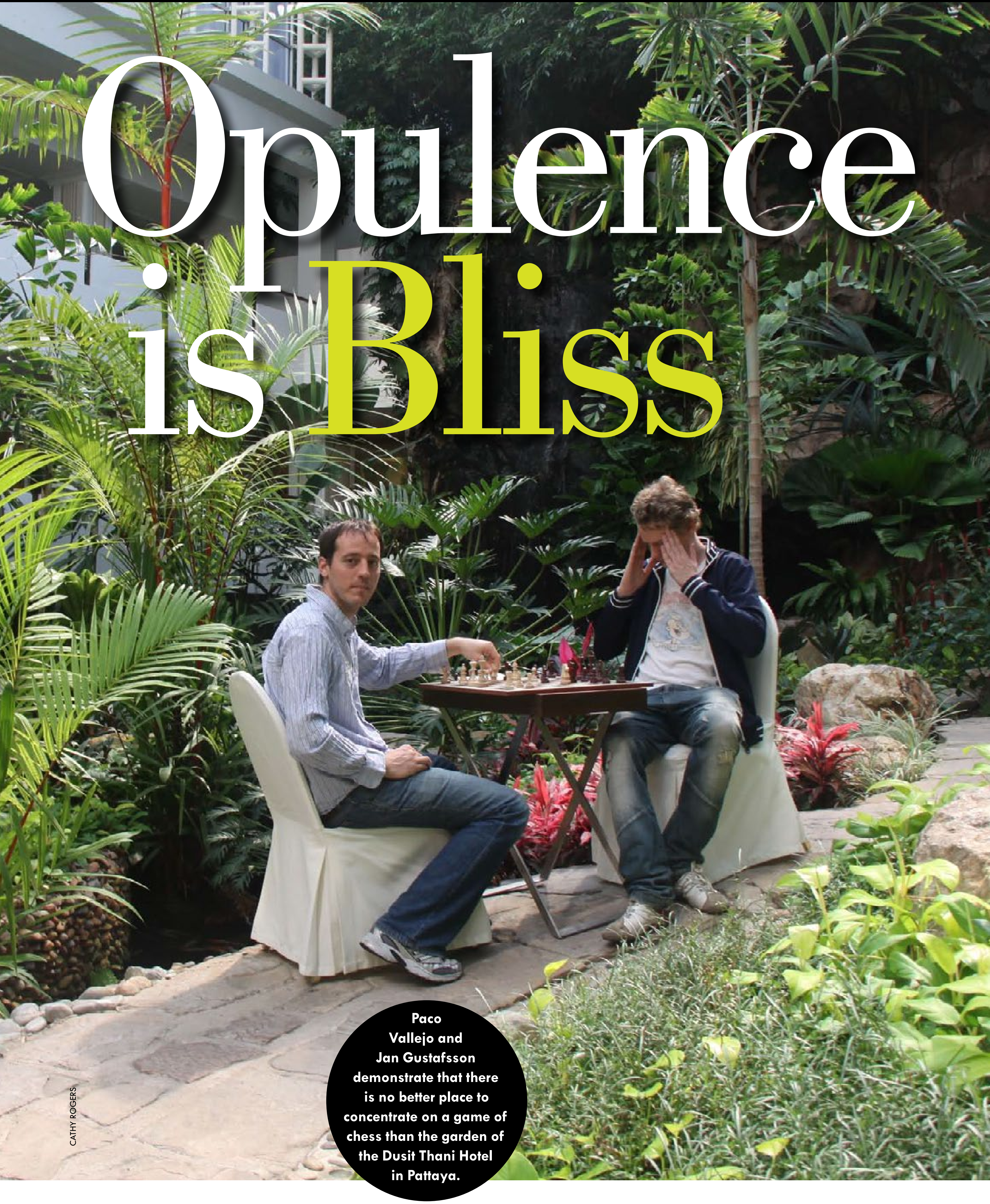
'Bobby Fischer felt like he was let down. He won this championship against Russia, for America, took them on himself. And he felt betrayed. When he went to Yugoslavia and spat on this letter, so what? The State Department had more important things to do than some chess player who was... Yes, I know of the things he said and 9/11, but I don't want to get into this.

'Again, I don't think he was that crazy. There he is, he feels he's done so much for the country and they take away his citizenship. For what? That's not good for a man. I remember speaking to Nei, late at night at the Loftleidir. They all got drunk up there, and this is well into the match. He said, my crowd don't want to lose this. Is it that important? Oh yes, yes. They also don't want to lose to some Jew from Brooklyn.

'Bobby died of a broken heart. He was a very proud American. He would have raised the flag at Iwo Jima.' ■

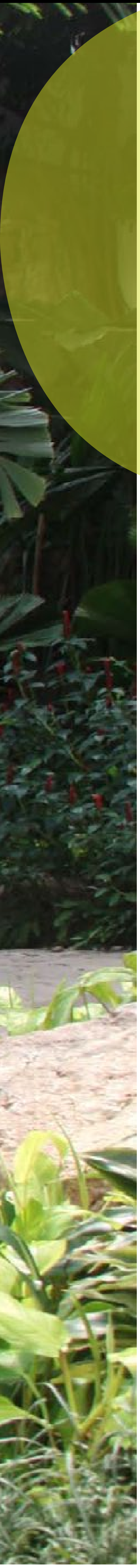
Harry Benson: *Bobby Fischer* ♦ 144 pages ♦ € 39.95 ♦ available at www.newinchess.com

Opulence is Bliss



CATHY ROGERS

Paco Vallejo and Jan Gustafsson demonstrate that there is no better place to concentrate on a game of chess than the garden of the Dusit Thani Hotel in Pattaya.



Pattaya

The Thailand Open is the epitome of opulence in the open chess tournament circuit. With a luxurious hotel for a venue, marvellous food and an array of tourist attractions, it's no wonder that this year's tournament featured strong Grandmasters such as Vallejo, Short, Gustafsson and Hansen. Australia's **Max Illingworth** participated in the tournament and shares his impressions.

The Thailand Open has been taking place in various locations in Thailand for a decade, and is renowned for hosting tournaments in excellent resort accommodation. This year, the players stayed in the Dusit Thani Hotel Pattaya, an elegant resort stretching from the North end of Pattaya Beach, at a discount rate that allowed players to live the affluent life without breaking their budget.

The tournament has previously been held in Bangkok, Pattaya, Phuket and Petchaburi, giving participants the opportunity to see more of the tourist attractions in Thailand each year. A number of Australians, including GM Ian Rogers, recommended that I play in this event due to the wonderful playing conditions and food. Suffice to say, the event exceeded all of my expectations.

As soon as I walked into the lobby of the hotel, I saw a large, lush tropical atrium garden, complete with waterfall.

Thailand is renowned for its healthy, fresh and delicious food, its temples, buddhas, and the annual Thailand Open. The hospitality of the Thai people is world renowned, and I experienced this myself in the hotel. The playing venue was a spacious room within the hotel, which was well-lit and comfortably held the 230 people playing in either the Thailand Open or the Thailand Challengers. On the first day, all players had their glasses refilled with water by the Dusit Thani Hotel staff, a service that was enjoyed by the players on the top 4 boards for the entire event.

The tournament coincided with the annual Songkran festival, which is the celebration of the Thai New Year. Water fights regularly took place outside the hotel, involving Thais, ex-pats and tourists, and no one was immune from the drenching (unless they stayed in the hotel).

During a walk on the tree lined boulevard adjacent to the beach, I observed Thai people selling food and squirting people with a range of water pistols and cannons. While the music from the bars was very noisy, the beach had a more relaxing atmosphere.

This year's event was the strongest in the history of the Thailand Open, with 43 titled players, ten of whom were GMs. The top seeds were Francisco Vallejo Pons, Nigel Short, Jan Gustafsson and Sune Berg Hansen, but the depth of the field ensured that no player could count on an easy road to tournament victory.

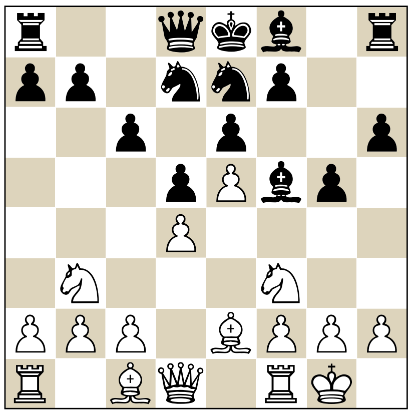
There were a large number of upsets in the early rounds, but by Round 6 a clear leader had emerged in Short, who took the clear lead with a win against GM Zaw Win Lay from Myanmar:

CK 4.2 – B12
Zaw Win Lay
Nigel Short
Pattaya 2011 (6.2)

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♗f5 4.♘d2 e6 5.♘b3 ♘d7 6.♘f3 h6 7.♗e2

White has played the Short System against its inventor. Black reacts in aggressive fashion.

7...♘e7 8.0-0 g5!?



Black has tried a number of alternatives, but this certainly qualifies as the most enterprising.

Black wants to play ...♗g7 and eventually ...f6, counterattacking in the centre.

9.♗d2 a5 10.a4

It's not clear whether the inclusion of a4 and ...a5 favours White or Black. c4 is now less tempting for White, but ...c5 is also less appealing due to the weakness of the b5-square.

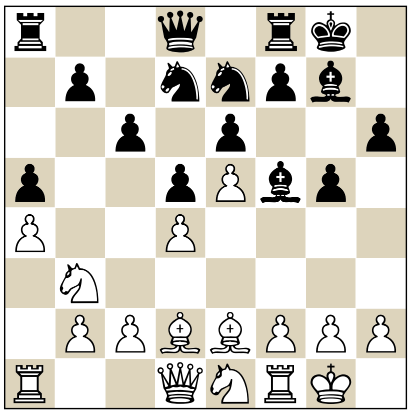
10...♗g7 11.♘e1 0-0

Black decides to continue his development before making a pawn break in the centre.

Instead, Satyapragyan-Pantsulaia, Calicut 2007, continued 11...c5 12.♗b5 ♘c6 13.♘xc5 ♘xc5 14.dxc5 ♗xe5, when the opening could certainly be considered a success for Black.

CATHY ROGERS

Nigel Short tried to prove that the hotel's terrace was another perfect place for chess.

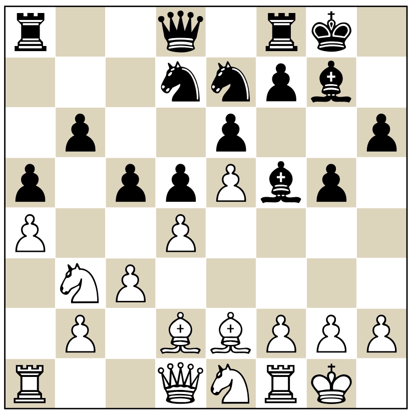


12.♘d3?! White wishes to discourage ...c5, but as Black achieves it in the game anyway, perhaps Zaw Win Lay should have preferred 12.f4, to open up the kingside, when 12...c5 13.♘xc5 ♘xc5 14.dxc5 ♕c7 15.♘d3 gxf4 16.♗xf4 is unclear.

12...b6 13.c3 13.f4 was again possible, when 13...c5 14.fxg5 hxg5 15.♗xg5! c4 16.♖xf5! exf5 17.♘f4 ♘xe5! is one line given by the computer that is just completely unclear.

13...c5 14.♘e1

14.dxc5 ♗xd3 15.♗xd3 bxc5 is very pleasant for Black, as the e5 pawn lacks proper defence.

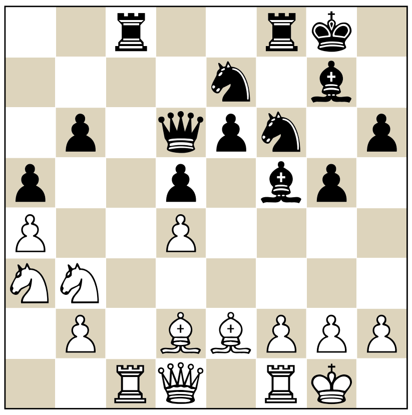


14...cxd4 More precise is 14...c4 15.♘c1 f6 16.exf6 ♘xf6, when compared to the game White's knights are very passively placed.

15.cxd4 f6 16.exf6 ♘xf6

I'd prefer Black in this position due to his more active pieces and White's lack of a plan.

17.♖c1 ♕d6 18.♘c2 White intends ♘a3-b5, utilizing the weakness of the b5-square. **18...♖ac8 19.♘a3**



19...♗g6

A useful move, preparing either ...h5 or ...♘f5.

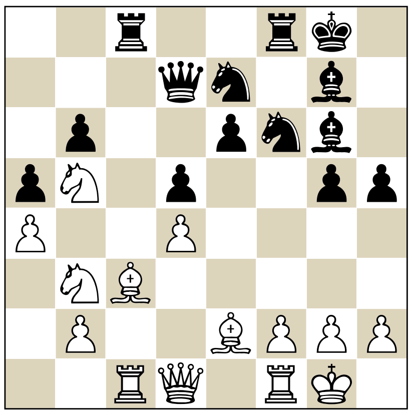
19...♘e4 would have been my preference, intending ...♘xd2 followed by putting pressure on the d4 pawn.

20.♘b5 ♕d7 21.♗c3

White has regrouped his forces, but nonetheless Black's position seems slightly for preference since White can't really coordinate his forces to attack the backward e6 pawn.

21...h5!?

It's not clear where the kingside pawns are going after 21...g4, but this does give White something to think about.



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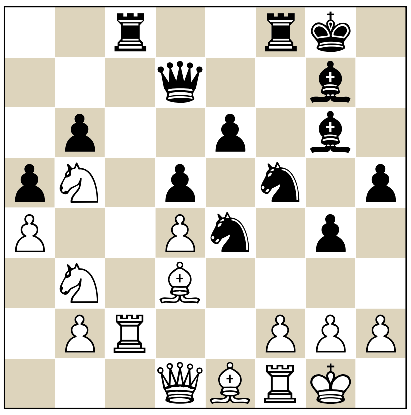
22.♗d3 g4 23.♖c2 23.♗xg6 ♘xg6 24.g3 ♘e4 is not an easy equalizer for White either.

23...♘e4! Black is beginning to seize the initiative. **24.♗e1 ♘f5!**



Black is not concerned by the possibility of his pawns being doubled, as he will have access to the d5-square if White takes on e4. Meanwhile White's f1 rook and e1 bishop lack good squares.

25.♖xc8 ♖xc8 26.♗d2

26.♗xe4 dxe4 27.♗c3 e3 is much better for Black due to his superior minor pieces, particularly his bishop pair.

26...♘xd2

26...♘ed6! was more accurate, as the d2 bishop is still inactive, when 27.♘xd6 ♕xd6 28.♗c3 ♗f6 maintains the pressure.

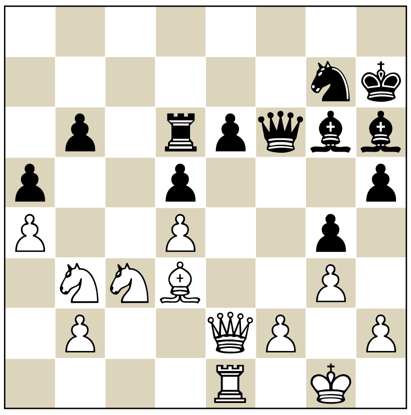
27.♕xd2 ♗h6 28.♕e2 ♕e7

White cannot contest the c-file, but he can try to tie Black down to the e6 pawn.

29.♖e1 ♖c6 30.♘c3 ♕f6 31.g3 ♔h7 32.♗b5 ♖d6 33.♗d3

White's last two moves constitute a silent draw offer. Nigel continues to play for a win.

33...♘g7



34.♗a6?!

It's not clear what the bishop is doing on a6.

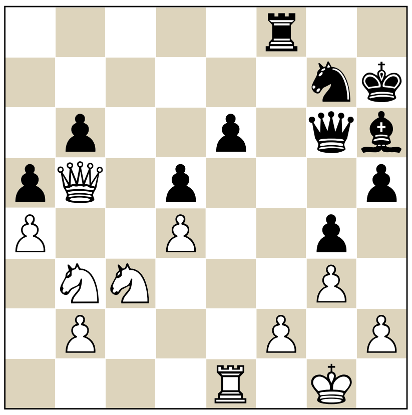
34.♗xg6+ ♕xg6 35.♘c1 would maintain the balance.

34...♖d8 35.♗d3 ♖f8 36.♗xg6+ ♕xg6

While Black is already attacking here, White hasn't been able to create clear play of his own. Even so, White's position should still be okay.

37.♕b5?

White threatens the b6 pawn, but Black's threats are more dangerous.



37...h4! 38.♕e2

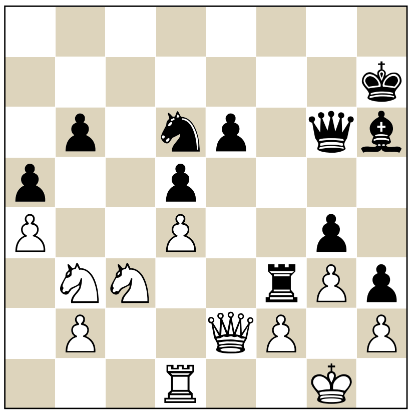
38.♕xb6?? ♕f5 39.♘d1 ♕f3 threatens ...h3, with dire consequences for White.

38...h3

Now Black can't manoeuvre a knight to f3 due to the weakness of the e6 pawn, however ...♖f3 is still going to put White under heavy pressure.

39.♘c1 ♖f3 40.♖d1 ♘f5 41.♘b3 ♘d6

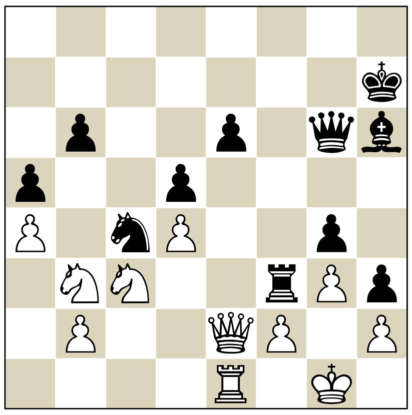
Black has steadily improved his position, whereas White hasn't been able to find good squares for his knights in the game.



42.♖e1?!

This makes ...♘c4 or ...♘e4 stronger, but it's hard to suggest anything better. 42.♘d2 ♗xd2 43.♖xd2 ♘c4 44.♖d1 ♕f5 makes it difficult for White to move, since rook moves allow ...♖d3.

42...♘c4



Suddenly Black is threatening ...♕f5 and ...♖d3.

43.♕xe6 ♕xe6 44.♖xe6 ♘xb2

White loses a piece, and with it the game.

45.♘xd5 ♖xb3 46.♔f1 ♗g7 47.♘e3 ♗xd4

White resigned.

At this stage I was having a dream run, starting with two wins against lower-rated opposition before drawing with GMs Gerhard Schebler, Jan Gustafsson and Niaz Murshed, with a win against a 2200 along the way. After an early draw with Schebler, my game against Gustafsson was quite interesting, where I had fought back from a worse position to achieve an advantage. In the end Gustafsson defended well, and my advantage wasn't sufficient for a win. Against Murshed I had been under pressure for most of the game, but I was able to find some strong defensive moves and slowly but surely equalize.

However, the next game was a major wake-up call. In an extremely complicated game against Norwegian FM Kjetil Stokke, I had managed to reach a winning position, but to his credit Stokke found an ingenious idea against what appeared to be a winning line. He eventually prevailed in the mutual time scramble. In spite of this disappointment, I was still in contention for an IM norm, which I achieved with wins over local player FM Boonsueb Saeheng and Singapore's Jarred Neubronner.

Returning to the top boards, in Round 7 Jan Gustafsson threw the tournament wide open with a win as Black over former outright leader Nigel Short. Here is the game with the winner's comments:

NOTES BY
Jan Gustafsson

RL 17.1 – C88
Nigel Short
Jan Gustafsson
Pattaya 2011 (7)

Man, did I try not to annotate this game. But the good people at New In Chess are very persistent. My consistent ignoring of emails did not help, they used them evil social networks to track me down by phone. Even pointing out my extremely busy schedule of having to watch the NBA conference finals every night from 3 a.m. – 7 a.m. was not accepted as a valid excuse.

Anyway, Thailand Open. Having heard good things from the regulars Nigel and reigning champion Sune Berg Hansen, I convinced Paco Vallejo that Thailand was the place to play. Big professionals that we are, we took a flight on Sunday right after the last Bundesliga round and arrived in the Dusit Thani Hotel in Pattaya the next Monday at 2.45 p.m., more than enough time to rest and prepare for round one at 3.30...

Quite a hotel, by the way! My room might well have been bigger than my flat, a tropical forest in the lobby, the most impressive dinner buffet I have ever seen, and so on and so forth. Combine that with a great climate, good infrastructure, tremendous food on every corner and a perfectly run tournament, and one starts to understand that all the praise I had heard was more than deserved. I've been told that Pattaya even offers some places to go out at night...

CATHY ROGERS

Tournament winner Jan Gustafsson at the far end of his hotel room 'that might well have been bigger than my flat'.

As for the tournament, I started struggling and was very lucky to have 5/6 against weaker opposition by the time of this game. Nigel had been cruising and was on 5½, including a draw against Vallejo. I was in a good mood anyway and had overcome jetlag and all that, so while it would be a stretch to say I was ready to fight, let's say I felt able to play...

1.e4
As expected. He had been going 1.d4 during his successful Gibraltar tournament a bit, but 1.e4 was still way more likely.

1...e5
Meh, don't really know anything else. I was slightly worried about getting caught in some tricky forgotten line. Nigel hasn't been shy to go for the Evans, the Four-Knights, and so on, systems one often neglects a little while trying to click one's way home in a Marshall. Having just published a DVD about a 1.e4 e5 Black repertoire, I did have to look at all them offbeat lines though, so they were still more or less fresh in my memory.

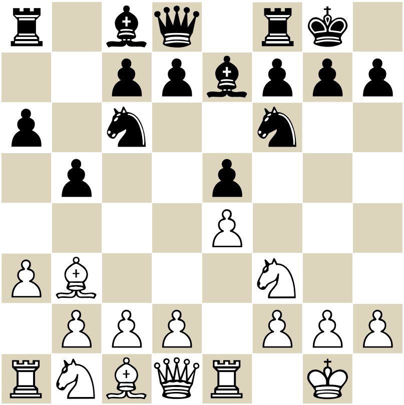
2.♘f3 No 2.f4 ☹. We were invited to an awesome 'VIP dinner' after the first round of the tournament (since when do they have players at those things?), and chatting about them sidelines we had agreed that 2.f4 didn't really make sense. No levelling this time around.

2...♘c6 3.♗b5 Main line today!

3...a6 A decent alternative to the more common 3...♘f6.

4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 0-0 Here we are, the good old Marshall starting position. Having followed the Kasparov-Short match as a kid, I was aware that Nigel knew a little something about this stuff, but what to do? White has a choice between going for it with 8.c3 or choosing one of the popular Anti-Marshalls 8.h3, 8.a4 or 8.d4 ...

8.a3
Or that one! Like 8.h3, White makes a slightly useful move which discourages the idea of losing a pawn with 8...d5 (much more attractive after 8.c3: hole on d3, no knight coming to c3 etc.) and tries to stir the game towards a slower Spanish torture.



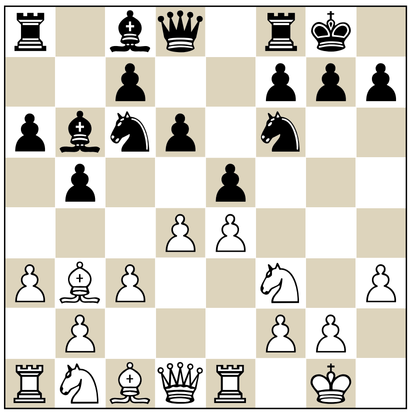
8...♗c5!?
The idea of going 8...d6 9.c3 d5!? briefly crossed my mind, but there should be a way to make use of that a3 move here. Having b4 covered will help in some lines. Instead, Black uses the fact that 8.a3 doesn't do all that much to activate his bishop and aims towards a decent version of that nameless (Möller, Tkachiev, Arkhangelsk? I just don't know) ...b5, ...♗c5 line. To counter that one, the most critical lines involve a4 and an early c3/d4 (without ♖e1), so the loss of a

tempo with ...♗e7-c5 can be justified. Having said that, 8...d6 9.c3 ♗e6 or some other sensible move is fully playable as well; a matter of taste.

9.c3 d6 10.d4 ♗b6

The bishop on b6 helps to put some pressure on the white centre, stopping the standard ♘d2-♘f1-♘g3 manoeuvre. The immediate threat is ...♗g4, so White's next is mandatory.

11.h3



11...h6

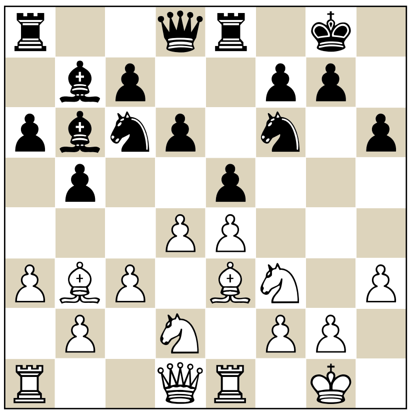
Aronian played the sharper 11...♖e8 against Carlsen here, but I wasn't sure about the consequences of 12.♗g5 h6 13.♗h4 when looking at it.

In general, I don't like them pinning my knight in these positions, hence the more cautious move in the game.

12.♗e3

Using the little tactic 12...♘xe4? 13.♗d5, White manages to complete his development without releasing the tension in the centre.

12...♗b7 13.♘bd2 ♖e8 All the standard moves have been made, White's next move will have a huge impact on the direction of the game.



14.d5!?

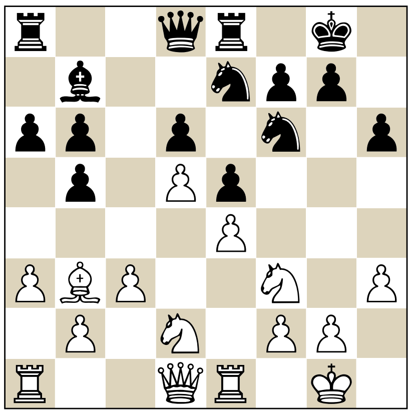
A committal decision. On the plus side, my last two moves are rendered useless. In the ensuing structure the bishop belongs on c8 and the rook on f8. On the other hand, the remaining black pieces will all find work, now that the centre has been fixed. There is a clear plan: ...♘e7-g6, ...♗c8, ...♘h7, ...f5, whereas White's way to go is less clear-cut.

I was expecting 14.♗c2, when I was planning to go 14...♘b8 Breyer-style. This has been seen already in Svidler-Leko (Monaco rapid 2006). It seems as if Black should be alright.

Another option is 14.♗a2, toying with ♕b3, for example after 14...♘b8?!. Black should probably go for 14...♕d7 instead. To take on e5 seems harmless, recapturing with either knight or pawn looks fine. The doubled pawns on b5/b6 after ♗xb6 are not much of a liability.

> 'The Sofia Rules are cool, us weirdos don't even get the chance to worry about them things...'

14...♘e7 En route to g6. **15.♗xb6 cxb6**



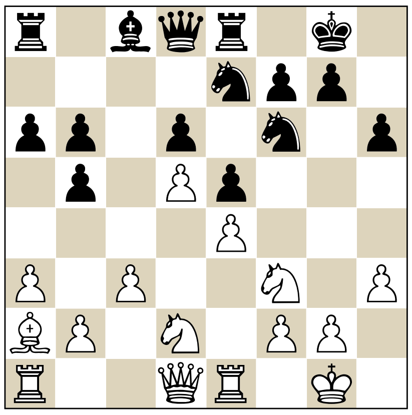
16.♗a2?!

I could not understand the point of this move during the game, and I still don't believe that the lengthy set-up b4, ♖c1, c4 is very much to the point. Nigel also seemed less than impressed with his play afterwards.

16.c4 was the move I was wondering about. Since Black is planning to play on the kingside, White has to undouble my pawns at some point to get his on play on the queenside going. It's not even clear if I should comply, after 16...bxc4 he can take with the bishop, which would then find a comfortable home on f1, defending the kingside and keeping an eye on a6. Instead, 16...♘g6!? doesn't look so bad. After 17.cxb5 axb5, the now isolated pawns still serve some good defensive functions, covering c4 first and foremost.

Arguably the best move was the prophylactic 16.♘h4!?, not allowing my knight to come to g6 uncontested. I was intending 16...g5 17.♕f3 ♔g7, but after 18.♘f5+ ♘xf5 19.♕xf5 White is a little better, as there are some fresh weaknesses in my camp. A cautious move like 16...♕c7 is a better reply.

16...♗c8



Part of the plan. This position is the reason I was hesitating to annotate the game. I thought I was doing fine and offered a draw here, which really would not have helped my tournament situation. Being a lifelong chicken, my head often feels like getting the draw offer out of the way, so I don't have to think about it anymore. The Sofia Rules are cool, us weirdos don't even get the chance to worry

There's no doubt about it. Our reporter Max Illingworth loves his hat, even in a tropical environment.

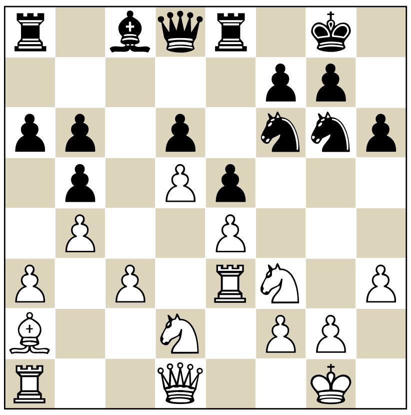
CATHY ROGERS

about them things... Credit goes to Nigel for turning me down, for him a draw would have been useful given the standings. Seems like he actually likes to play chess!

17.b4 Continuing down that road, so I also got my pieces to their spots.

17...♘g6 18.♖e3

Defending h3 and hinting at his plan to go ♖c1, c4 and ♖ec3. But it's soo slow!



18...♘h7

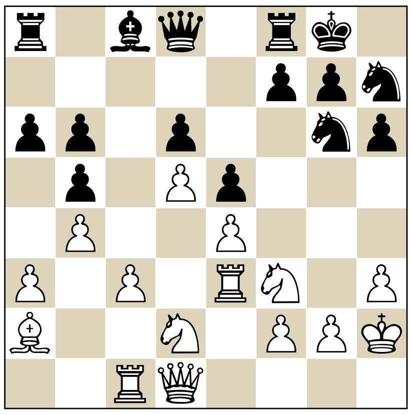
A standard idea, preparing ...f5, freeing the way for the queen and sometimes adding ...♘g5 to the menu.

19.♔h2 Still not in a hurry.

19...♖f8

If he takes his time, so can I, was my thinking. Nothing wrong with the obvious 19...♘f4 either.

20.♖c1



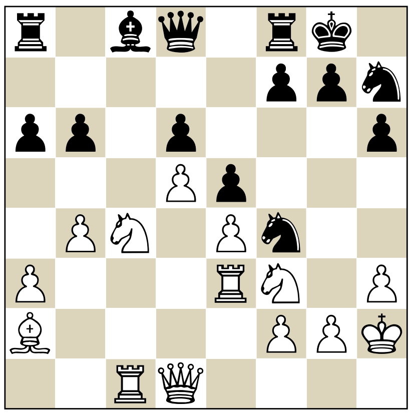
20...♘f4

Here 20...f5 was an option as well, but the guy belongs on f4 anyway. The comp is suggesting 20...a5, which didn't cross my mind at all. They taught me not to move pawns on the side I am weaker on and all that. In general, the comp doesn't seem at his best in this type of position, or (more likely) I don't get the depth of its ideas.

21.c4 Finally, some action! The threat is not so much cxb5, but c5, so I gotta take this time around.

21...bxc4 22.♘xc4

22.♗xc4 f5 23.♗f1 looks awfully passive.



22...b5!?

Still not sure about that one. It breaks the 'rule' I just mentioned and invites the knight to invade on c6. But it also frees my queen from guarding b6 and d6, and I was hoping that the c6-guest would look pretty but would not contribute much to the game, blocking the c-file for his own rooks instead. I've seen this happening in some King's Indian games, but you never know.

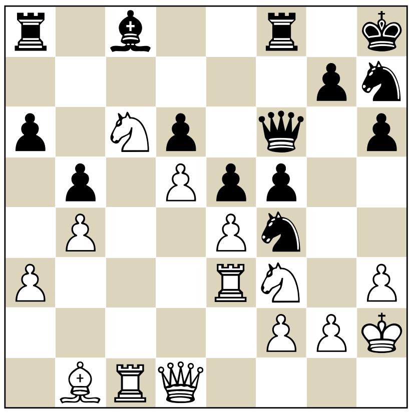
23.♘a5 f5 Here we go.

24.♘c6 I was actually more concerned about 24.♖c6?, which is refuted by 24...fxe4 25.♖xe4 ♘g5!.

24...♕f6 24...♕e8? 25.exf5 ♗xf5 26.♘fxe5 dxe5 27.♖xe5 should be avoided.

25.♗b1 Sober and probably best. During the game I was unsure what would happen after 25.♘cxe5?!, but I thought there had to be something good. And indeed, 25...fxe4 (25...dxe5 26.♖c6! ♕d8 27.d6+ ♔h8 28.♘xe5 gives White the initiative) 26.♖xe4 ♘g5! 27.♘xg5 ♕xg5 favours Black.

25...♔h8 An easy move to play, avoiding forks on e7.

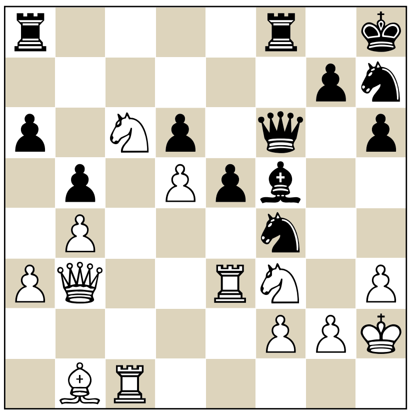


26.♕b3?!

I had been very happy with my position for a while, but Mr. Houdini only now starts to join my team. After the far from obvious 26.♕c2 he is still claiming the usual 0.00. Puny humans...

26...♗d7 This looked normal, planning ...♖ae8 to invite everybody to the party. 26...fxe4 27.♗xe4 ♗f5 was quite good too.

27.exf5 What else? **27...♗xf5**



28.♘cxe5!?

That one came as a bit of a shock. Had I blundered something or was that desperation? With my king on h8 that move had disappeared from my radar. Hmm, didn't look like I blundered, so I took the knight. We didn't have oceans of time left at this point. White wasn't spoiled for choice. The weakness of d5 and the looming attack on the kingside made his position quite difficult already, so it's hard to give a question mark for trying to change the course of the game. But it should not work.

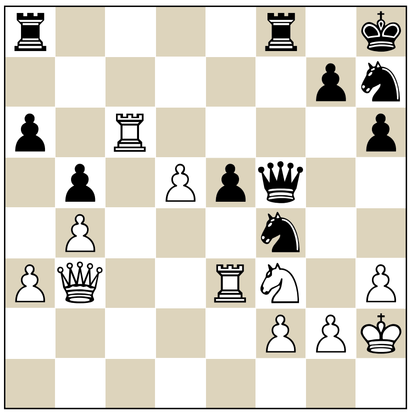
28...dxe5

28...♗xb1 was actually more precise: 29.♘g4 ♕g6 30.♕xb1 h5!, trapping the knight on g4. Did not see that.

29.♖c6 ♕f7

29...♕d8 was probably a better move, but ...♕f7 looked more forcing to me.

30.♗xf5 ♕xf5



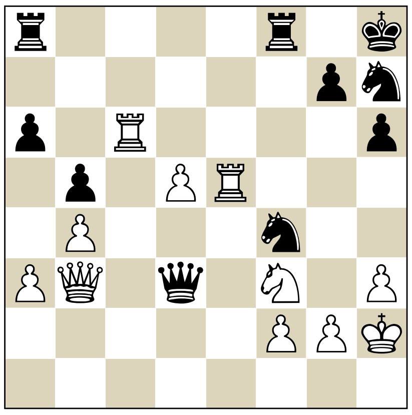
31.♖xe5?

As expected, but bad. We both missed the surprising 31.g4!, forcing the queen to enter a square where it will allow ♘xe5 with tempo: 31...♕d7 32.♘xe5 ♕a7 33.d6. Black must be better, but it's far from easy to prove. After 33...♘g5, 34.d7 gives White counterplay.

31...♕d3?

Following my plan, 'piece up, must exchange queens'. But it's wrong! 31...♕d7 was much better, White lacks coordination now and won't be able to get enough for the piece. Black should win.

Following my plan, 'piece up, must exchange queens'. But it's wrong!



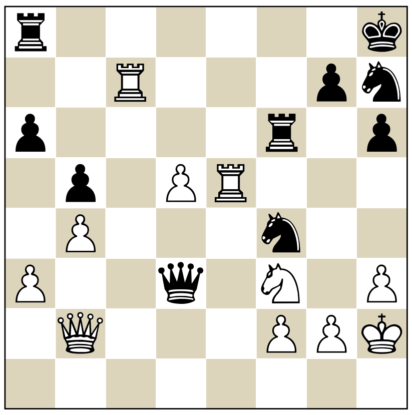
32.♕b2? The final mistake. Surprisingly, 32.♕xd3 ♘xd3 33.♖e3 was still quite playable. I had seen that one, but thought I was winning after 33...♘b2! (33...♘xf2? 34.♖c2) 34.♘e5, when in fact it turns out there is still a lot of work ahead.

32...♖f6!

No funny business on g7, please.

33.♖c7

The last trick.



33...♖g6

And it's curtains: 34.♘h4 ♖xg2+, and checkmate. It wasn't too late to blunder with 33...♕f1 34.♘e1 ♘xg2?? 35.♘xg2 ♖xf2??, which looks quite tempting until one sees 36.♖e8+ ♖xe8 37.♕xg7 mate.

A nice win for me, which I owe to my opponent's fighting spirit. I reopened the race for first, thanks to my Buchholz guys!

In closing I'd like to thank the organizers and sponsors of the truly wonderful Thailand Open. I even forgave them for these nasty double rounds on the first days... I'll be back!

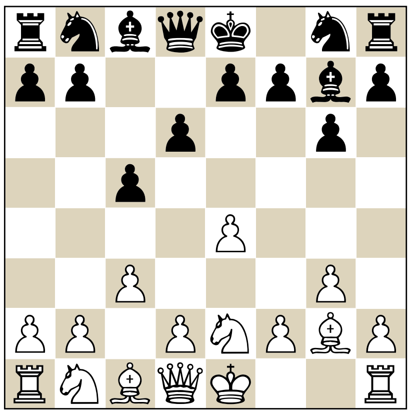
■ ■ ■

This win placed Gustafsson in equal first place with Vallejo on 6/7, with five players (including Short) on 5½/7 and in contention for first place. One of Vallejo's notable games in this event was in Round 3, against the Indian Shastry Arvind:

SI 48.10 – B20
Paco Vallejo
Shastry Arvind
Pattaya 2011 (2.1)

1.e4 c5 2.♘e2 d6 3.g3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.c3

The basic idea of White's setup is to play d4 as in the Big Clamp but without spending a tempo on d2-d3. This has the desired effect, as Black immediately goes astray.



5...e6?!

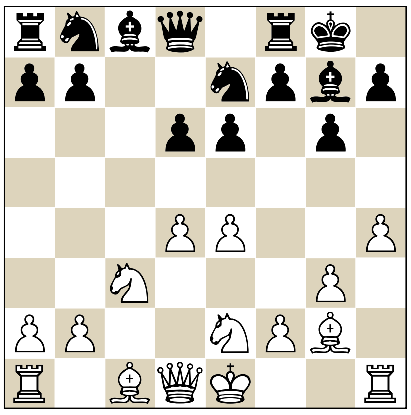
This move gives White too much of a free hand in the centre.

5...♘f6 is probably the best reply, when the game Karjakin-Carlsen, Moscow World Blitz 2009, continued 6.d4 0-0 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.h3 e5 9.♗e3 cxd4 10.cxd4 exd4 11.♘xd4 ♘e5, with a fully satisfactory position.

6.d4 cxd4 7.cxd4 ♘e7 8.♘bc3 0-0 9.h4!?

A novel approach to the position. White gains space on the kingside, intending a future h5 advance.

The natural 9.0-0 had been seen before.



9...h6?!

Concerned by the prospect of a kingside attack, Black immediately creates a target for White to attack with ♗e3 and ♕d2.

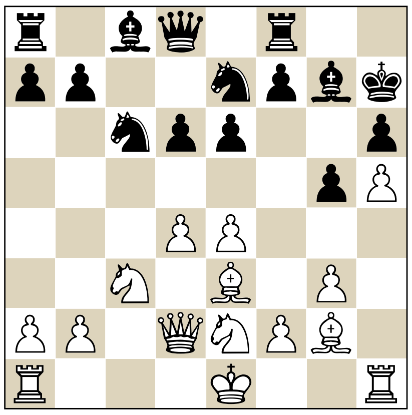
9...d5 10.e5 is an improved Advance French, as Black's dark-squared bishop is misplaced.

The computer's 9...f5 may be best, but White retains a strong initiative with 10.h5 fxe4 11.hxg6 hxg6 12.♗xe4 d5 13.♗c2.

10.♗e3 ♘bc6 11.♕d2

Gaining a useful tempo before opening up the kingside.

11...♔h7 12.h5 g5



13.f4! gxf4 14.gxf4

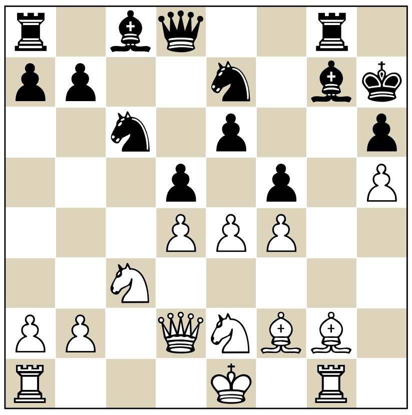
Now White has a clear space advantage on the kingside and queenside, while Black's position is devoid of counterplay. In the game he tried to counter in the centre, but his spatial difficulties remained.

14...♖g8 15.♖g1 d5 16.♗f2

The computer wants to castle, but in fact White's king is perfectly safe in the centre since Black's pieces are very passive.

16...f5

16...dxe4 17.♗xe4+ f5 18.♗f3 is also unappealing, but may be the best chance, as Black at least has the d5-square for his knight.



17.e5!

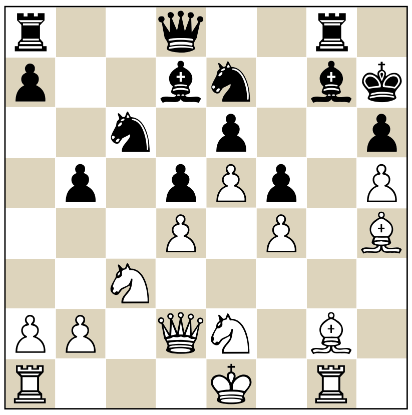
The correct move, taking more space. White is already clearly better, as Black lacks good squares for his minor pieces.

17...♗d7 18.♗h4

Tying Black up.

18...b5?

This move is somewhat desperate, but Black's position was bad in any case.



19.♗f3?!

White's position remains very good, but Vallejo could have been almost

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winning after 19.♘xd5! exd5 20.♗xd5, and now 20...♖f8 (20...♘xd5 21.♗xd8 ♖axd8 22.♖c1 is winning for White) 21.♗f3! followed by 22.d5 would give White a strategically winning position.

19...♕b6 20.♔f2

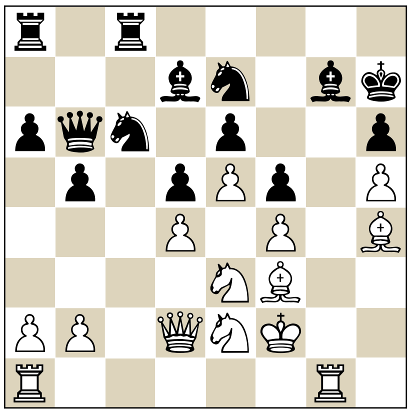
Connecting the rooks.

20...♗h8 21.♖gc1!

Correctly keeping all the pieces on the board.

21...a6 22.♘d1 ♖gc8 23.♘e3 ♗g7 24.♖g1

Even though White is much better, Black lacks major weaknesses. Therefore Vallejo aims to stretch Black's defences on the kingside.

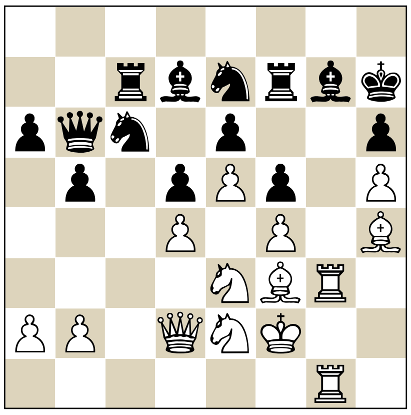


24...♖c7?!

24...♖g8 was necessary to contest White for the g-file.

25.♖g3 ♖f8 26.♖ag1 ♖f7

Arvind appears to be holding off White's initiative, but Vallejo shows this to be an illusion.

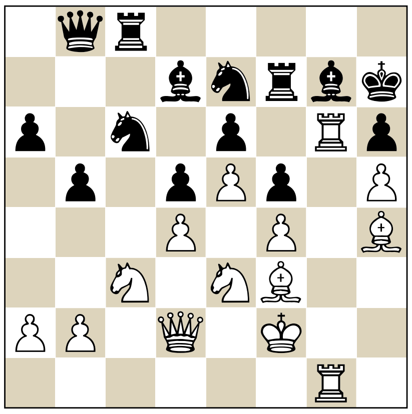


27.♖g6!

The rook is immune due to 28.hxg6.

27...♘g8?!

Now it is all over, but Black's position was already losing, for instance 27...♕b8 28.♘c3 ♖c8



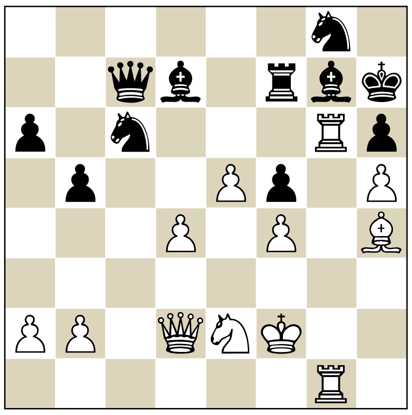
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

29.♘exd5! exd5 30.♗xd5 ♘xd5 31.♘xd5 is already resignable for Black.

28.♗xd5!

The knight enters the attack, with decisive consequences.

28...exd5 29.♘xd5 ♕a7 30.♘xc7 ♕xc7



31.e6 ♗xe6 32.♖xe6 ♗f6 33.♗xf6 ♘xf6 34.♕c2

Black resigned.

In Round 8 the co-leaders quickly drew against each other, giving Nigel Short the opportunity to catch them on 6½/8 with a win as Black against GM Jha Sriram. Of the other players on 5½/7, Stokke's game against GM Abhijeet Kunte ended in a draw, and Pieter Hopman, who had just shocked Sune Berg Hansen, lost against Murshed.

The final day pairings were guaranteed to produce exciting games:

Murshed (6)-Vallejo (6½)
Short (6½)-Kunte (6)
Gustafsson (6½)-Stokke (6)

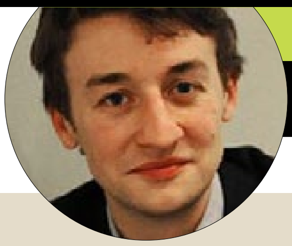
Pattaya 2011

1	Jan Gustafsson	IGM	GER	2647	7½
2	Nigel Short	IGM	ENG	2676	7½
3	Paco Vallejo	IGM	ESP	2707	7½
4	Martin Voigt	FM	GER	2325	7
5	Yang Kaiqi	IM	CHN	2399	7
6	Jha Sriram	IGM	IND	2442	6½
7	Sune Berg Hansen	IGM	DEN	2603	6½
8	Max Illingworth	FM	AUS	2345	6½
9	Roy Saptarshi	IM	IND	2395	6½
10	Somak Palit	IM	IND	2378	6½
11	Niaz Murshed	IGM	BAN	2455	6
12	Abhijeet Kunte	IGM	IND	2526	6
13	Nelson Mariano III	-	PHI	2197	6
14	Zaw Win Lay	IGM	MYA	2382	6
15	Kjetil Stokke	FM	NOR	2407	6
16	Achim Illner	FM	GER	2353	6
17	Alina l'Ami	WGM	ROU	2297	6
18	Dmitry Sklyarov	FM	RUS	2415	6
19	Tejas Bakre	IGM	IND	2530	6
20	Atanu Lahiri	IM	IND	2350	6
21	Thomas Willemze	IM	NED	2390	6
22	Aung Aung	IM	MYA	2324	6
23	Myo Naing	IM	MYA	2317	6
24	Khherdekar Sauravh	FM	IND	2325	6
25	N. Sanjay	-	IND	2335	6
26	Daniel Contin	IM	ITA	2316	6

141 players, 9 rounds

Short won convincingly against Kunte after the latter's pawn sacrifice backfired, however it was not until the endgame that Vallejo and Gustafsson prevailed against their tenacious opposition. After the dust had settled, the top three seeds were in equal first place on 7½/9, with Gustafsson winning the title of 2011 Thailand Open Champion on tiebreak. IM norms were achieved not only by yours truly, but also by FM Martin Voigt, who shared fourth place with IM Kaiqi Yang, and Filipino Nelson Mariano III.

The Thailand Chess Association is fortunate to have gold sponsorship from Dusit Thani Pattaya and Elite & Populus PYN Fund Management. For me, what makes or breaks a tournament are the playing conditions, the food, and the strength of the tournament. The 2011 Thailand Open delivered superbly on all three counts, and I look forward to participating again next year! ■



Through the Luking Glass

Luke McShane

All the world's a stage

> And all the men and women merely players

People say that the eyes are the windows to the soul, though nobody has tried to sell me double-glazing yet. Still, judging by the number of poker players sporting sunglasses, there are plenty of people who believe that their cards can be read in the involuntary dilation of a pupil. Just as our features reveal our thoughts, our actions display our nature. We like to assume that chess players' styles are a reflection of their character, and that a game is a struggle between personalities and ideologies. That's something to welcome, because those characteristics make chess more than just an elaborate puzzle and turn it into a form of culture. The Fischer-Spassky match became a symbol of the Cold War. History isn't always written by the winners, but even among spectators, few people like to have their opinions contradicted by the facts. So it turns out that, on that occasion, Fischer's unbridled imagination overcame the might of the Soviet hegemony. Bravo!

Karpov-Kasparov was billed as a match between the establishment hero and the subversive new order, and it's easy to imagine the appeal for Kasparov in resurrecting this subversive spirit in the political sphere. Presenting chess as a battle between different forces is a great way to attract an audience. Indeed Jonathan Rowson argued on these pages some time ago (New In Chess 2009/7 – ed.) in an article entitled 'Bring back the Cold War!' that chess has lost its way in recent decades because we no longer have such a compelling story as a backdrop. He might be right, and there's plenty of fun to be had in seeing our own skirmishes as a reflection of our own innermost character, as well as our social surroundings.

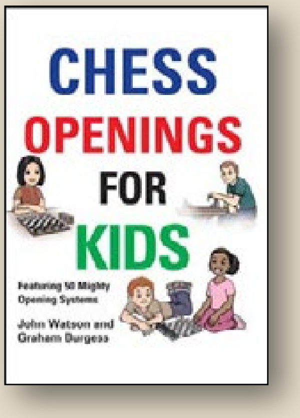
On the other hand, there's another way to see things, according to which chess is more akin to acting. I found a quote from Anand in an interview with *Der Spiegel*: 'The moment in which you realize that you have made a mistake is the most unsettling you can imagine. You have to try to keep control of your emotions. Chess is a form of acting. If your opponent senses your insecurity or your annoyance or your dejection, then you are bolstering his courage.' He might just need a new set of shades, but that's not the only sense in which acting plays a part in a game of chess.

Our moves have a meaning, and appear to display some form of character. That means that for the duration of a chess game, we're able to become somebody altogether different. Chess is exciting because it gives us a chance to be brave, or iron-willed, or sadistic, or invincible, or unpredictable, or cunning, or downright tricky. Some of those opportunities don't arise all that often in everyday life, and others aren't socially acceptable. The fact that our bravery might prove foolhardy, or that our dodgy gambit scheme might unravel before our eyes, only makes the experience more real.

Most players understand that there is an intimate connection between the opening moves and the shape of the ensuing battle. (In fact, I have the impression that the stronger a player gets, the better he/she understands how much scope there is for a game to twist and turn in unexpected directions. But in general, nobody would argue that the link between opening and middlegame/endgame still holds true.) That means that the stage which opens up for us at the beginning of the game makes all the difference to our scope for thrill-seeking later on.

In light of all this, I was quite fond of the recent book *Chess Openings for Kids* by John Watson and Graham Burgess. It's a simple book, which features '50 Mighty Opening Systems' each covered in a couple of pages. I suspect that for many juniors, it's very common to end up with an opening repertoire that is copied from players who are members of the same club, or has been handed down by a trainer, but this book will have done its job if it provides encouragement to step beyond those limits. Apart from a few cartoons of, say, bishops firing arrows into pawns, it is not a childish book at all. It provides a very succinct overview of the main openings, and the ideas behind them. I'm not sure who wrote what, but it did call to mind some of Watson's other abstract comments about the opening from his other books, which I tend to enjoy and find interesting. Commenting on the Queen's Gambit Exchange Variation, 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.cxd5 exd5, the authors write, 'Why would White give the bishop on c8 a free path, when the fundamental problem with 2...e6 is blocking in that piece? It turns out that the bishop still has a hard time finding a home, and White gets promising new ways to attack'. And on they go with some variations.

It's easy to be overwhelmed by the amount of chess openings, and forget that, rather than being arbitrary sequences of moves to commit to memory, they do actually have a certain logic to them. Giving these things just a little bit of thought early on must be a constructive habit for any young player. Actually, my favourite aspect of the book was the set of pithy subtitles given to each chapter. Sometimes flippant, they nevertheless shed just a little light on the opening in question. The Symmetrical English is described with the line 'Anything You can do, I can do better', the Dutch is 'What the Sicilian sees when it looks in the mirror?' On the other hand, the Ruy Lopez is deemed to be 'a true test of chess understanding'.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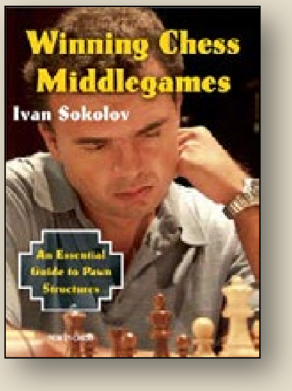
John Watson & Graham Burgess
Gambit 2011

Depending on your temperament, one of those sentiments may inspire you to try the opening in question, and that's exactly what the authors recommend in their conclusion on the final page. Although they don't make any explicit claims of covering every chess opening, I did notice one notable omission – try as I might, I couldn't find any mention of the Catalan! Rather like a person erased from a photo, you might not notice unless you already knew...

Apart from acknowledging that some openings, like the Ruy Lopez and the Najdorf ('The greatest chess opening of them all?') have an elevated reputation, there isn't much effort to distinguish between the merits of different openings. So, for example, the Morra Gambit ends up with about as much space as the Semi-Slav. A little voice in my head gently objects, on principle. I must be getting old. The pragmatic part of me knows there is nothing wrong with this – for almost any purpose the Morra is a reasonable opening, and it's certainly helpful to know what it is. Moreover, the real goal of this book is to present the openings on an equal footing, and let curiosity do the rest.

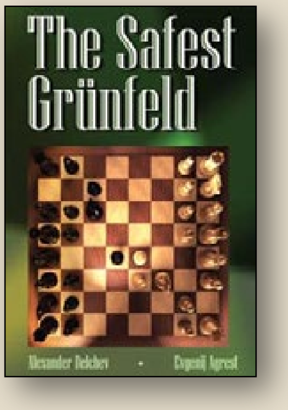
Many amateurs are advised that time spent studying chess openings would be much better spent on improving their skill in the middlegame. I tend to agree with that advice, but opening books are constantly popular, among all ages. That might be because cold-blooded improvement is not really at the forefront of people's minds at all. It can be much more fun to endlessly mould one's chess persona than to get any better at the game.

Unfortunately, the role one wants to play isn't always the same as the one that's suitable. Some time ago, I remember reading Michael Adams' foreword to Ivan Sokolov's much admired book *Winning Chess Middlegames* (New In Chess 2009). Mickey wrote that 'often players choose their opening repertoire according to quite haphazard criteria, randomly picking up lines without giving serious consideration to how the resulting middlegames would suit them. To resolve this problem, a bit of retro-analysis can prove helpful. By studying the resulting middlegames and determining your strengths and weaknesses it is possible to go back to the earlier stages of the game and set out your stall accordingly'. Indeed, we can end up trying to act out parts that don't suit us at all.

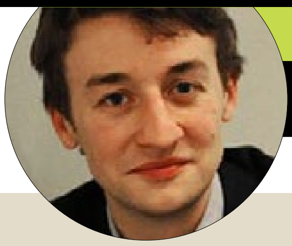

Winning Chess Middlegames
Ivan Sokolov
An Essential Guide to Pawn Structures

Winning Chess Middlegames
Ivan Sokolov
New In Chess 2009

One of the more oddly titled books to be released lately is *The Safest Grünfeld* by Alexander Delchev and Evgeny Agrest, and it's an idea I rather like. (Actually, Delchev has previously written a book entitled *The Safest Sicilian*, which I haven't seen but may well be worth a look if the Taimanov Sicilian floats your boat.) It's true that 'The Safest Exchange French' might not be a title to fly off

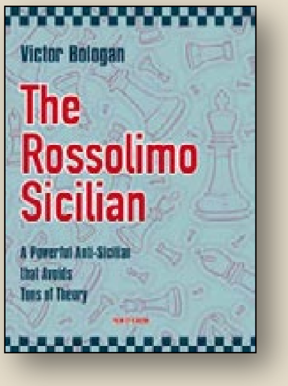


The Safest Grünfeld
Alexander Delchev & Evgeny Agrest
Chess Stars 2011



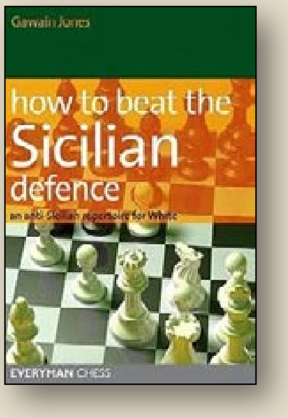
the shelves, but *The Safest Grünfeld* somehow ticks a lot more boxes, reassuring readers even before the first page that the authors are not making any extravagant claims for their subject. There are plenty of exciting possibilities, but the authors are also not afraid to present a line leading to stale equality where appropriate. This is a repertoire book, with each line of the Grünfeld covered in three stages – a section on the main ideas, both tactical and strategic, followed by a more detailed analytical discussion and a final section with complete games. The analytical sections look meaty, without skimping on verbal explanation where it counts, but as is explained in the introduction, the repertoire choices are designed to steer the game into more positional channels where possible. I hope I am brave enough to give *The Safest Grünfeld* an outing some time.

Another unpretentious book I've received is Bologan's latest, *The Rossolimo Sicilian*. This one is subtitled as 'A Powerful Anti-Sicilian that Avoids Tons of Theory'. Named after Nicholas Rossolimo, whose interesting life Bologan briefly discusses, the idea of playing 3.♗b5 in the Sicilian took a long time to gain widespread acceptance. Described in 'Chess Openings for Kids' as 'Healthy development with a rich choice of plans', it is not such an easy opening to write about, as the rich choice of plans makes it hard to offer recommendations. At times, I found it a little difficult to understand why the variations were structured in the way they were – positions which I wouldn't consider particularly critical were analysed in some detail. Then again, a position doesn't have to be critical in order to be instructive and worth delving into. At times, the book reads like a collection of well-chosen games and ideas, with lots of Bologan's thoughts thrown in. And if the lack of structure seems very important, the Rossolimo might not be the right opening to pick after all.



The Rossolimo Sicilian
Victor Bologan
New In Chess 2011

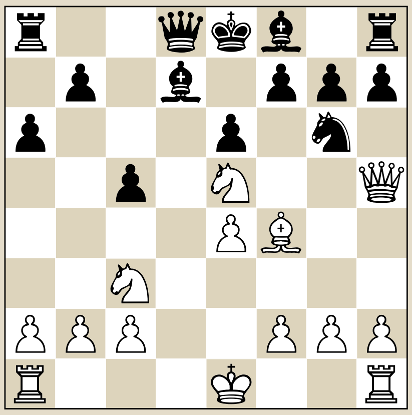
Another book to consider turning to for a weapon against the Sicilian is Gawain Jones's *How to Beat the Sicilian Defence*. He constructs a repertoire based around 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6/d6 3.♗b5(+), and recommends a King's Indian Attack setup against 2...e6. It speaks volumes that Gawain successfully used these ideas against Bologan himself at the recent European Championship in Aix-les-Bains, off the back of the preparation which went into the book.



How to Beat the Sicilian Defence
Gawain Jones
Everyman Chess 2011

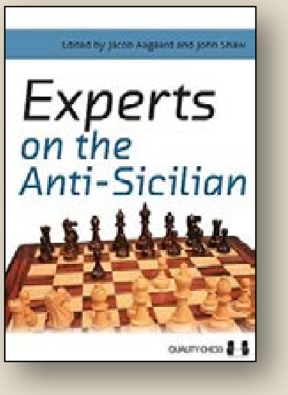
SI 1.4 – B51
Gawain Jones
Victor Bologan
Aix-les-Bains 2011 (6)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♗b5+ ♘d7 4.d4 a6 5.♗xd7+ ♗xd7 6.dxc5 dxc5 7.♘c3 e6 8.♗f4 ♘e7 9.♘e5 ♘g6 10.♕h5



Analysing the game Ni Hua-Carlsen, from London 2009, where Carlsen tried 10...♗c6, Jones explains that the bishop (on f4) cannot be taken, and that it's hard to find a constructive move for Black after the exchange on e5. **10...♘xe5 11.♗xe5 h6 12.h4 ♗c6 13.♖d1 ♕a5 14.0-0 c4 15.♘d5!** Black is in serious danger and Jones won a fine game.

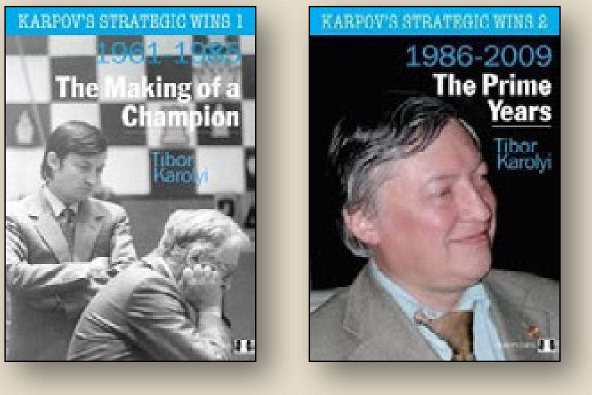
If you hail from the other side of the tracks, the collection of articles edited by Jacob Aagaard and John Shaw titled 'Experts on the Anti-Sicilian' might be useful, although not all of the material is written from Black's point of view. A strong collection of authors from Quality Chess each cover a different line, with their own distinctive voice. My favourite idea was, unfortunately, one that you won't get too many opportunities to try: 2.b3 against the Sicilian is one of White's more offbeat tries, and I've no doubt there are various ways for Black to get a decent game. I was facing Stuart Conquest re-



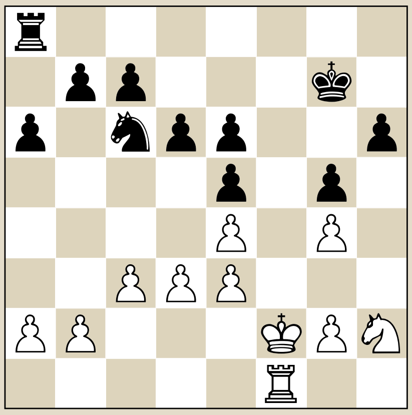
Experts on the Anti-Sicilian
Edited by Jacob Aagaard & John Shaw
Quality Chess 2011

cently in a London League match, and the position after 2.b3 appeared on the board. I had the urge to pick up my g-pawn, which looks pretty ridiculous, but I knew it wasn't and I couldn't recall why. A couple of hours later, I finally realised that I had come across this idea while looking through some online samples of new books. Peter Heine Nielsen comments: 'I always liked this move, mainly for its obvious naivety; Black challenges White to a race for the a1-h8 diagonal'. Provoking the pawn push to e5 often leaves White as the one stuck with a pin in a few moves time, while the aggressive e5-e6 idea does no serious damage, as Nielsen demonstrates. Thanks to his suggestion, I got a very comfortable position – that and other promising ideas can be found within.

Utterly saturated with openings books, I was delighted by an anecdote from the introduction of Sokolov's book mentioned earlier. 'I still remember watching one of Anatoly Karpov's post mortems, when he had won from some initially inferior Ruy Lopez with black. His opponent, slightly annoyed, remarked 'Here, after the opening, you were definitely worse,' to which the 12th World Champion calmly replied: 'Yes, but soon I was better.' Karpov has recently turned 60, so it seems fitting, and indeed timely, that there are two new books written by Tibor Karolyi, *Karpov's Strategic Wins* I and II. The move 24.♘c3-b1! from Karpov-Spassky is familiar to many, but I liked another example which the author thoughtfully exhumed for comparison.

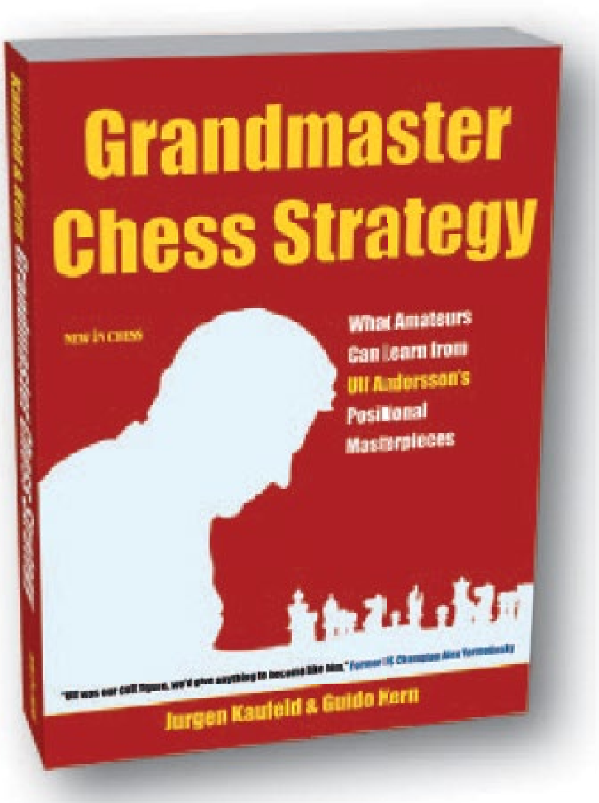


Karpov's Strategic Wins I and II
Tibor Karolyi
Quality Chess 2011



Slim Bouaziz-Anatoly Karpov
Hamburg Television 1982

25...♘b8!! White has sensitive pawns on d3 and g4, and pushing d3-d4 loosens e4 instead. **26.♘f3 ♘d7 27.♔g3? ♘c5 28.♖d1 a5 29.♔f2 ♖a6 30.♔e2? ♘a4!** and Black won. ■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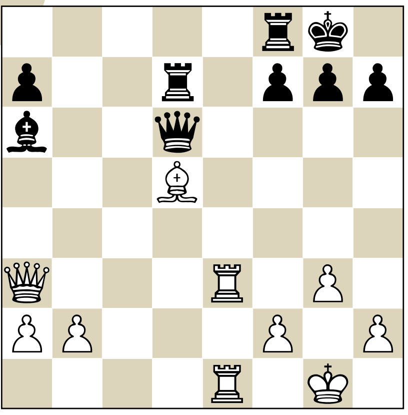
Forcing Moves

Solutions of page 73

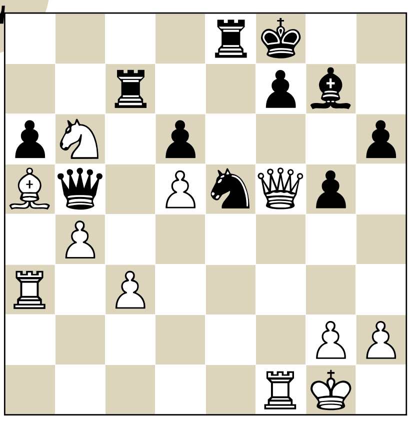
1



Lombardy-Kramer
New York 1957

White skipped the technical phase with **1.♗c6! ♗c8** 1...♕xc6 2.♕xf8+; 1...♕xa3 2.♖xa3. **2.♗xd7 ♕xd7 3.♖d3 ♕c6 4.♕d6 1-0**

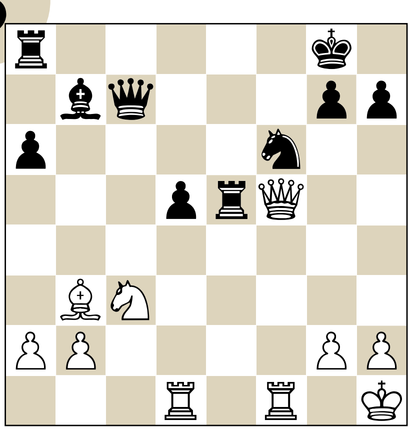
2



Lombardy-Arnason
Reykjavik 1978

The ‘petite combinaison’ **1.♘a8!** intending ♘c7, was a cute exchange-winner, but the real art was in the sequel: **1...♖xa8 2.♗xc7 ♔e7** when wimpy consolidation with ♖d1 looks normal, but Lombardy creatively pressed the attack on d6: **3.♖a5!** Rybka also likes 3.♕h7!, fine for engines that spew lines like 3...♗f8 4.♖xf7+!! ♘xf7 5.c4 ♕xc4 6.♖e3+ ♔d7 7.♕xf7+ ♔c8 8.♖e8+ ♔b7 9.♗a5+. **3...♕b7!** What now? **4.♖c5! ♖f8** The beautiful threat was 5.♖c6!, winning d6. **5.♖e1!** Now 6.♖c6 decides. **5...dxc5 6.♗xe5 ♗xe5 7.♕xe5+ 1-0.** Generally an aggressive positional player, Lombardy also enjoyed tactical skirmishes, and Rybka’s endorsement of his bold treatment here is high praise.

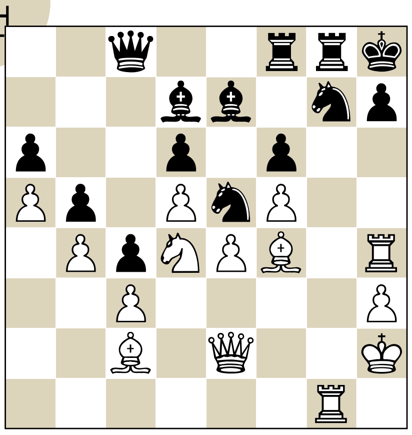
3



Lombardy-Böök
Munich 1958

The pleasing textbook capture **1.♘xd5!** induced resignation; if **1...♗xd5 2.♖xd5! ♖xf5** 2...♘xd5 3.♗xd5+. **3.♖d8** Mate.

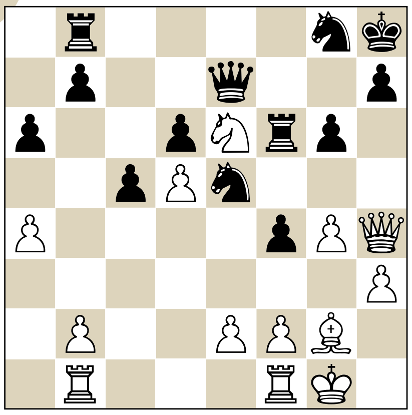
4



Zuckerman-Kostro
Polanica Zdroj 1972

Zuckerman preferred sharp openings and was a slashing, correct attacker at his best. The elegant thematic finale was **1.♖g6!** intending ♖xh7+. **1...♘f7** 1...♘xg6 2.fxg6 h5? 3.♖xh5+ mates. **2.♖xh7+! ♔xh7 3.♕g4** And Black’s comical clump of dead wood is too stuck to defend the king, **1-0.** Rybka protests that 1...♘h5! 2.♕xh5 ♖f7 holds out longer, but White’s extra pawn and boa-like grip bode slim prospects to alter the outcome.

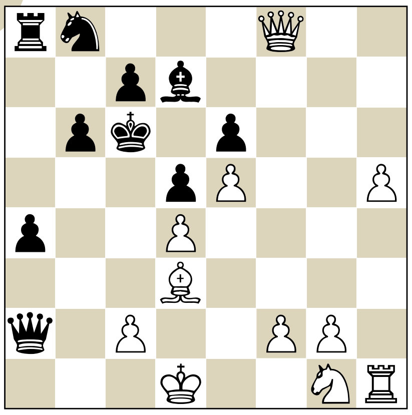
5



Razuvaev-Zuckerman
Polanica Zdroj 1972

White relied on 1...♖xe6? 2.g5! but was embarrassed by ‘Zuckerbook’s’ sharp eye for tricks and swindles: **1...g5! 2.♕xg5** 2.♘xg5 ♖h6 or 2.♕h5 ♖h6 3.♕xg5 ♖xe6. **2...♖xe6 3.♕xf4 ♘g6 0-1**

6



Zuckerman–L.Levy
New York 1974

In a moment of good humor, ‘Bernie’ lets the full comedy of the situation play out on the board: **1...♕b1+ 2.♔e2 a3 3.h6 a2 4.h7 a1♕ 5.h8♕** 5.♔f3 produces a perhaps unique skewer of two queens! – 5...♔b7! 6.h8♕ ♘c6. **5...♕d1+ 6.♔e3 ♕ac1** Mate.

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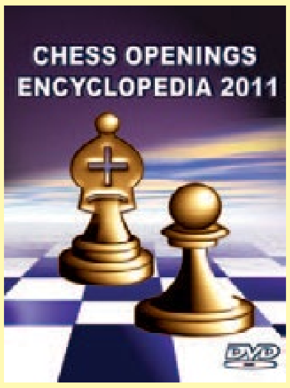
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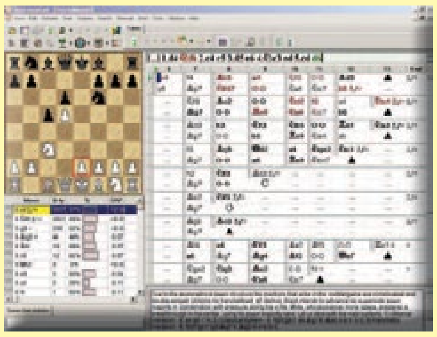

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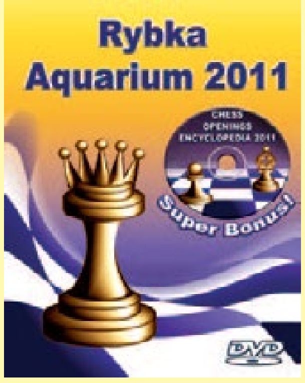
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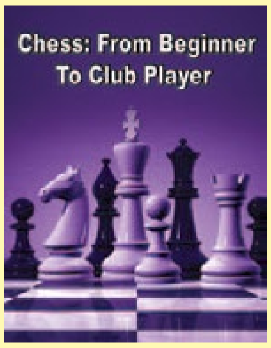
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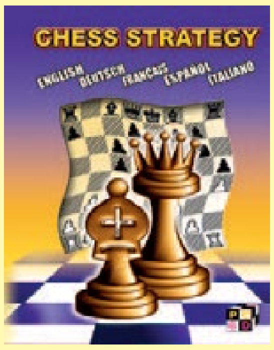
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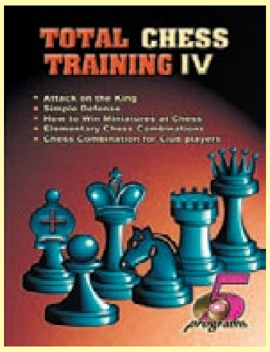
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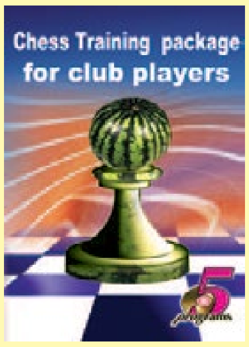
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Jan Timman

Favourites stumble in tiebreaks

It was for the third time in the history of chess that FIDE took the step to organize Candidates' matches. It happened for the first time in 1965, after Fischer had accused the Soviets of collusion during the Candidates' tournament in Curaçao. Two decades later, there was a short-lived experiment with a Candidates' tournament, but by the next cycle, three years later, they had returned to the matches. Another nine years on we had the chaos of the knock-out world championship, which lasted for about eight years. This was followed by two big and reasonably successful world championship tournaments.

What strikes one is that the matches are getting shorter and shorter. Until 1988 they consisted of a minimum of 10 games. Then that number was reduced to six. I remember the storm of objections amongst the top players. The matches were too short. If a player got the lead, he would be able to freewheel out the rest of the match. Nor did a number of top players like the prospect of tiebreaks. I remember Lajos Portisch's indignation during one of the GMA meetings. A match ought not to be decided through rapid games. The best player needed to be determined through classical chess.

In a poll before the matches Gelfand and Grischuk combined got less than four percent of the votes

With the number of matches reduced even further, it struck me that I heard almost no critical voices. Okay, Magnus Carlsen withdrew, but it never became entirely clear for what reason. At the occasion of his withdrawal, other players had a chance to speak their mind. The general tenor of their comments was that although they didn't regard the system as ideal, they would be able to live with it. I have the impression that the current generation of top players tends to be pretty resigned about these things.

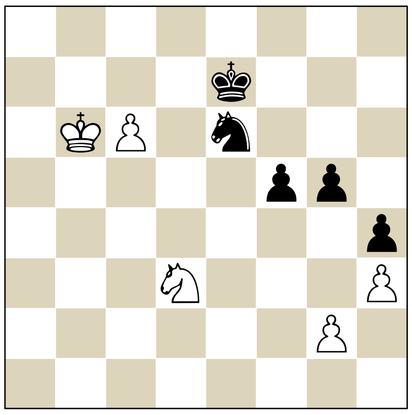
Portisch must have been horrified to see that some matches in Kazan were not even decided by rapid games, but through ordinary blitz games. In the end, two players from outside the Top-10 went through to the final.

The four quarter-finals divided into two little groups: Aronian-Grischuk and Kramnik-Radjabov saw a tentative kind of chess, with the players in both games trying to take as few risks as possible. They were apparently not averse to the idea of a tiebreak. Of the four players, Grischuk had the least solid opening repertoire, and he had an uphill struggle as Black. On the other hand, his skills in blitz are rightly praised, and this factor turned out to be decisive in the end.

Topalov-Kamsky and Gelfand-Mamedyarov were clearly more hard-fought affairs, so it should come as no surprise that only these two matches produced decisive results.

◆

Aronian was generally regarded as the number one favourite. In a poll on *ChessVibes* he got no less than 64 per cent of the votes. To compare: the eventual finalists Gelfand and Grischuk got less than four per cent combined. In the first game, Aronian seemed to live up completely to his role as favourite. But then his machine started stuttering.



Aronian-Grischuk, 1st match game
position after 68...♔e7

White's powerful passed c-pawn makes this knight ending winning for White. But not all continuations are winning.

69.♘c5??

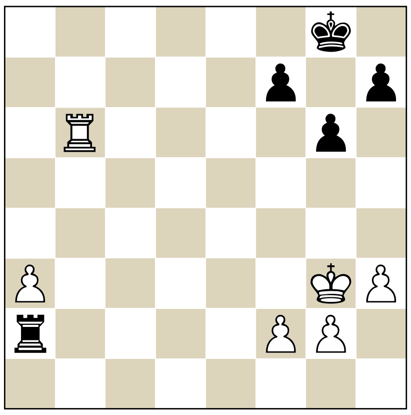
A terrible mistake. The pawn ending is just short of winning for White. There was a guaranteed simple win with 69.♘e5. After 69...♔f6 70.♘f3 Black will eventually be forced to sacrifice his knight for the c-pawn. The remaining endgame no longer causes White any technical problems.

69...♘xc5 70.♔xc5 ♔d8!

At this point, Aronian realized that he had miscalculated and immediately conceded a draw.

◆

A serious disappointment for Aronian. After a win he would have already had one foot in the final. Now he was facing the possible prospect of tiebreaks. He had another game as White, in which he again made good progress.



Aronian-Grischuk, 3rd match game
position after 43...♖xa2

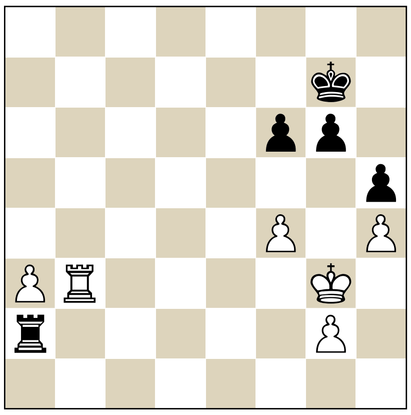
After a difficult defence Grischuk has taken refuge in this stereotypical rook ending. Now White has to decide where to put his rook.

44.♖b3 This yields few practical chances. In these kinds of endgames, covering from the side is effective if the rook can at the same time protect a kingside pawn, leaving the king free to march to the queenside. Here, this plan is hard to realize.

The alternative was 44.♖a6, followed by 45.h4. Practice has shown that this leaves Black with a difficult defensive job.

44...♔g7 45.f4 h5 46.h4 f6

Grischuk wants to clear up the situation on the kingside as quicky as possible. 46...♔f6 would also have been good.



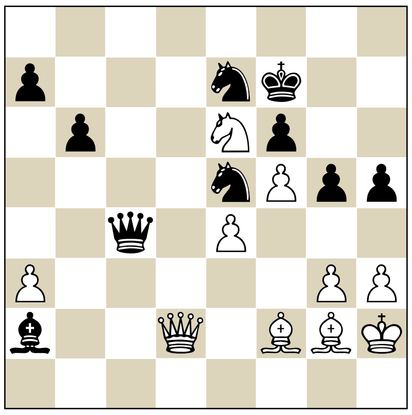
47.♔f3 Now 47.♖b7+ was White's last chance. The white rook needs elbow room. With the text, White destroys his last prospects and comes closer to the tiebreak.

◆

In the fourth classical game, Grischuk did not push, and in the tiebreak he managed to outplay Aronian.

Kramnik-Radjabov hardly saw any high points. In the faster games Kramnik's technique proved slightly superior.

There was almost a third tiebreak. In the fourth game, Topalov had to beat Kamsky. Just before the time-control he seemed to be close.



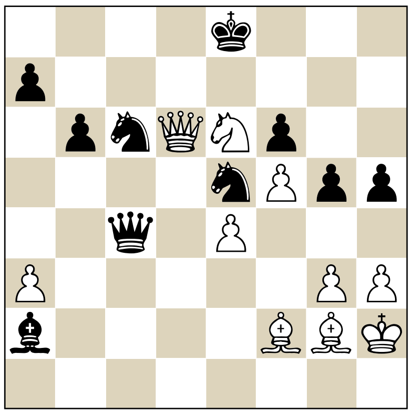
Topalov-Kamsky, 4th match game
position after 38.♘e6

The white knight has just gone to e6. The situation is dangerous for Black, but with 38...♗b3 he could have stayed afloat. The white queen loses square d1, while the sortie 39.♕d8 can be met by 39...♕c8.

But Kamsky had only seven seconds for three moves, which makes it very hard to find accurate defensive moves.

38...♘7c6? Now White will be able to breach the black defence.

39.♕d6 Topalov, who had a couple of minutes left, played this at once, and suddenly White is completely winning. **39...♔e8**

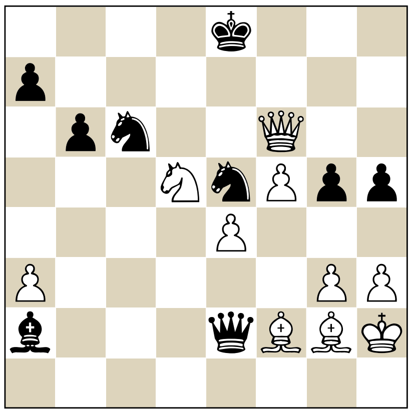


40.♘c7+ Good enough, but the most accurate move was 40.♗d4!. By deploying another piece, White will soon be able to breach the blockade of the black knights, after which mate will soon follow.

40...♔f7 41.♘d5

Although Topalov is an experienced match player, he does something here that is not so wise from a practical point of view. It would have been better to repeat moves, to take time to calculate the most convincing win. After 41.♘e6 Black would have had no better than 41...♔e8.

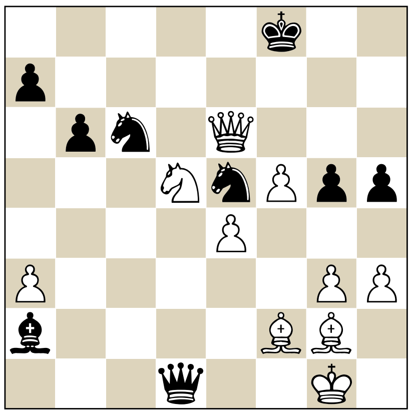
41...♕e2 42.♕xf6+ ♔e8



43.♕e6+

There's nothing wrong with this check as such, because White can repeat the moves later. A watertight win was 43.♗g1!, and after 43...♗xd5 44.exd5 ♘f3+ 45.♔h1 ♘cd4 46.♕g6+ ♔d7 47.f6 Black is left empty-handed.

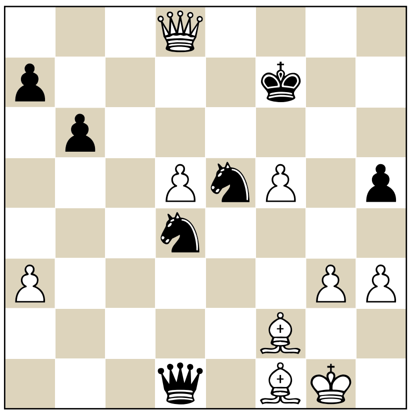
43...♔f8 44.♔g1 Winning was 44.♕h6+ ♔f7 45.♕f6+ ♔e8 46.♕h8+ ♔f7, and now again this crucial move 47.♗g1. **44...♕d1+**



45.♗f1?

Topalov played this at once, thus sealing his fate. With 45.♔h2 he could still have worked his way into the above-mentioned variations.

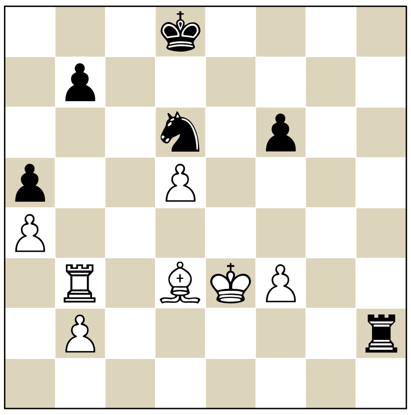
45...♗xd5 46.exd5 ♘d4 Now the black knights are forming a mighty block in the centre. **47.♕f6+ ♔g8 48.♕xg5+ ♔f7 49.♕d8**



49...♕c2! Topalov may have overlooked this crucial queen move. Black is suddenly no worse than White.

◆

In the semi-final, Grischuk again met one of the great favourites, and again he suffered as Black but managed to hold. In fact, he had fewer problems than against Aronian.



Kramnik-Grischuk, 2nd match game
position after 48...♖h2

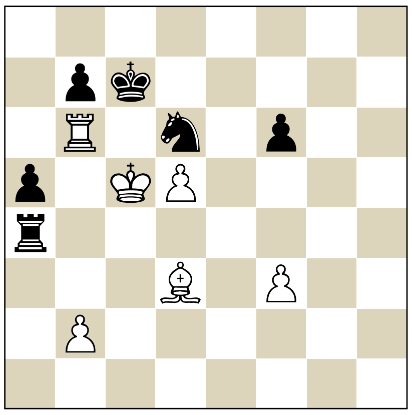
Grischuk had sacrificed a pawn in the early endgame in order to build a fortress, which is still standing. Now Kramnik tries to penetrate with his king.

49.♔d4 ♖h4+ 50.♔c5 ♔c7 51.♖b6

The point of the previous moves. The computer indicates that Black can now maintain the balance with 51...♘c8, since after 52.♖xf6 b6+ 53.♔b5 ♘d6+ 54.♔a6 ♖h8 White would be forced to sacrifice an exchange. Grischuk finds an elegant way to solve his minor problems.

51...♖xa4

All kinds of computer programs utterly condemn this capture.



52.b3

A harmless move which allows Black to maintain his fortress with ease. The main line started with 52.♖xd6 ♖b4 53.♗b5. Both players had calculated that the pawn ending after 53...♖xb5+ 54.♔xb5 ♔xd6 55.♔xa5 ♔xd5 is a draw: White captures the b-pawn, and Black the f-pawn. When the white pawns queen, the black one goes to f2. This is where things become problematic for the computer, which regards this elementary endgame as winning.

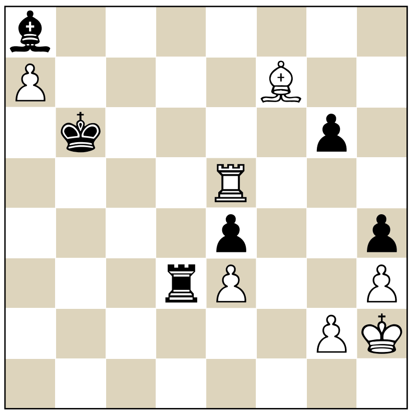
52...♖b4 53.♖xb4 axb4 The most convincing route to the draw.

54.♔xb4 b6

Black has a perfect fortress. Kramnik decided not to try and break it.

◆

In the fourth game, Grischuk quickly offered a draw: he was ready for the tiebreak. The first two rapid games ended in relatively quiet draws. Then Kramnik got his chance.



Kramnik-Grischuk, 3rd rapid game
position after 45...♔b6

Anything can happen in a rapid game, of course, but Kramnik now makes an extremely uncharacteristic mistake.

46.♖e7?

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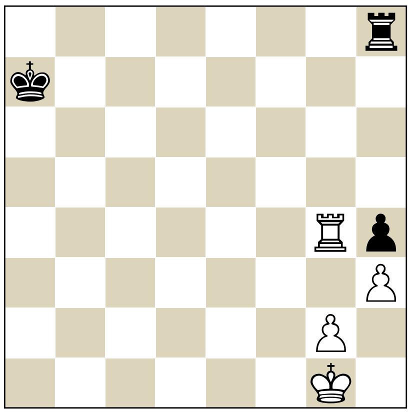
There was no reason to cover the a-pawn. After the simple 46.♗xg6 White could have aimed for a technically winning rook ending. Black has nothing better than 46...♖xe3, after which White continues with 47.♖e6+ ♔xa7 48.♔g1. After 48...♗d5 49.♖e5 ♖d3 50.♗xe4 ♖e3 51.♖xd5 ♖xe4 52.♖g5 ♖e8 53.♖g4 ♖h8 White must play accurately.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

With 54.♖b4! he cuts off the king. If Black then plays 54...♔a6, White goes 55.g3 hxg3 56.♔g2, with a tablebase win.

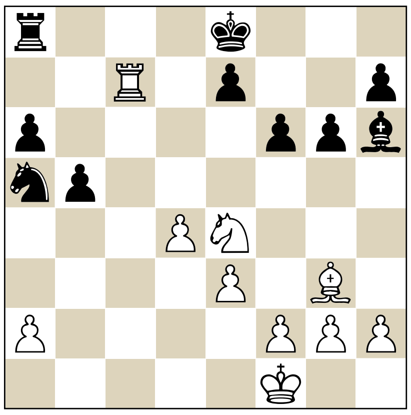
46...g5

Of course. Black keeps his g-pawn, and later similar positions will arise, but with that extra g-pawn for Black.

◆

After this windfall Grischuk, as White and true to type, quickly offered a draw. He managed to best Kramnik in the rapid games, and so Grischuk reached the final without having won a single game of classical chess.

The other semi-final match was a far more nail-biting affair. In the second game Gelfand missed an open chance.



Gelfand-Kamsky, 2nd match game
position after 26...a6

Black's Grünfeld has gone hopelessly wrong. White is holding all the trumps and now has a devastating power move.

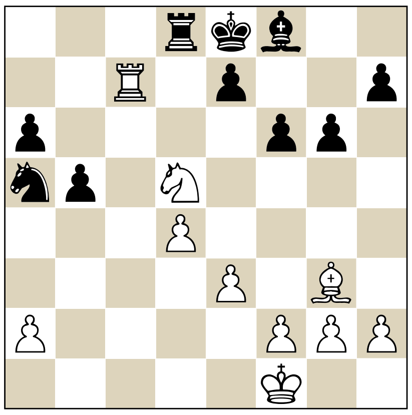
27.♘c3

Gelfand thought about this for a good while. Naiditsch, who provided comment online, observed at this point that Gelfand had undoubtedly seen the power move 27.♗d6!. Frankly speaking, I have my doubts. If Gelfand had seen that move, he would certainly have played it. Black cannot capture the bishop, since after 27...exd6 28.♖xh7 his position will soon collapse, while after 27...♗f8 28.♗c5 he hasn't much to hope for either. The bishop is dominating the position. The white plan consists of taking the knight to d5.

27...♗f8 28.♘d5

Now the knight has also landed on this central square, but it is less powerful because the bishop is not so dominant. Yet White still has a large advantage.

28...♖d8



29.e4

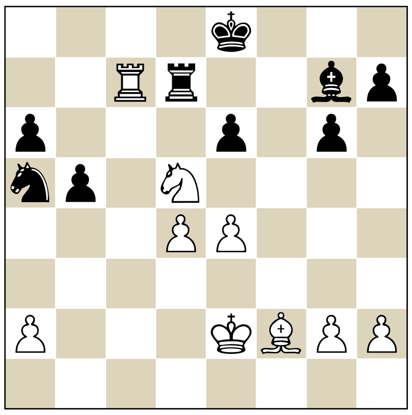
This advance considerably eases Black's defensive task. White had three knight moves, all of them stronger than the text. It is good to maintain the set-up with the pawn on e3. The best continuation was 29.♘b6 in order to keep the black knight away from c4. After 29...♖b8 White has two possibilities:

A) 30.♖xe7+ ♗xe7 31.♗xb8 ♘c6 32.♗g3 ♘b4 33.a3 ♘a2!, and Black will probably just be able to hold;

B) 30.♘d7! ♖a8 31.d5 ♖d8 32.♘b6 ♖b8 33.♖xe7+ (now the liquidation is stronger) 33...♗xe7 34.♗xb8 ♘b7 35.♘c8!, and White has excellent winning chances.

29...f5 This highlights a drawback of White's previous move. Black will be able to swap pawns and in doing so weaken the white centre.

30.f3 fxe4 31.fxe4 ♖d7 32.♔e2 ♗g7 33.♗f2 e6



Another accurate defensive move. White is still slightly better, but it doesn't amount to much.

◆

After this setback nerves started ruling the match, not only in the fourth game, but especially in the tiebreak games, which were marred by errors. Gelfand proved superior in the rapid games.

At the start of the final, Grischuk looked like he was calling the shots, but after he missed a win in the second game, things came to an impasse. For three games running, neither player really tried to win, which was not so strange in view of the exhausting programme they had behind them. They had already been performing under extreme pressure for three weeks.

After an uneventful fifth game had ended in a draw many people thought that the issue was going to be decided in a tiebreak again. In the final game, however, Gelfand did something that neither Aronian nor Kramnik had managed to do: he not only succeeded in building up an opening advantage with white, but also managed to extend it. This made him the first player in Kazan to win a game as White. Gelfand was good for two of the total number of three wins, and therefore a completely deserving winner. ■

Garry Kasparov

Letter from the Soviet Chess School

The last few decades have witnessed the appearance of more and more world-class players from countries with little or no chess culture. China and India are powerhouses just one generation removed from their first Grandmasters. Norway and Vietnam have produced their first stars and America is finally seeing a new wave of talent after a missing generation. Yet it appears that the death of the Soviet School of chess has been greatly exaggerated.

The 2011 Candidates' matches in Kazan boasted a field out of Bobby Fischer's nightmares. Seven 'Soviets' and a Bulgarian who speaks perfect Russian! Three of the four semi-finalists – Kramnik, Kamsky, and Gelfand – drank directly from the source and possess the seriousness and solid chess foundation that was the hallmark of the Soviet school. To complete the picture, the eventual winner was the eldest and most Soviet-grounded of the lot in Boris Gelfand. The Israeli now has a chance, if a slim one, to improve the soothsayer credentials of Botvinnik, who was asked in 1990 to name the top contenders of the day for what was then my crown. He named Ivanchuk and Gelfand, 21 and 22 at the time, as well as Anand and Shirov. He also suggested keeping an eye on a promising 15-year-old named Vladimir Kramnik.

The 2011 Candidates' matches in Kazan boasted a field out of Bobby Fischer's nightmares. Seven 'Soviets' and a Bulgarian who speaks perfect Russian!

Botvinnik was 49 when he won his last world championship match in 1961 and didn't end his quest for the title until he was 52. I doubt even he would have imagined that Gelfand would come closest to the title over 20 years after his prediction, although I am far from the last person to suggest that Boris's age puts him over any meaningful hill. He'll be 43 by the time the match is scheduled to take place, and based on FIDE's track record he could be 44, or even older, by the time the match happens. Anand turns 42 at year's end, so his and Gelfand's combined ages will produce one of the highest sums of the post-Steinitz era, right below Alekhine-Bogoljubow in 1934 (86) but older than Botvinnik-Petrosian in 1963 (84) and even old Lasker sweating against Capablanca in Havana in 1921 (84). The sixties generation is not stepping aside just yet!

Prior to the Kazan event, a FIDE official privately ranked the Candidates by preference vis-à-vis finding sponsorship for the title match. Aronian was the top seed, and the Armenian's win would be great news thanks to Ilyumzhinov's ties with his country's political leadership. The other big favourites Kramnik and Topalov had already proven capable of putting a match together. Grischuk would be a new face with Russia desperate to regain the title. The two Azerbaijanis wouldn't be the most formidable challengers, but their nation's oil money would undoubtedly be available. Kamsky would not exactly be welcome, but there was always a chance it could mean opening a new frontier in America. And of course it couldn't be Gelfand!

These assumptions were one reason why Ilyumzhinov's bunch so casually turned their backs on the impressive London world championship bid of $2.4 million euros for the players and FIDE. Now FIDE, and Anand, have the last match they were looking for. The good news for the champion is that Gelfand is not his most dangerous opponent. The bad news is that sponsors are aware of that as well!

The Candidates' event was a political piece of great value for Ilyumzhinov and he finally played it to Kazan with an Azerbaijani wildcard still intact. There is every reason to expect the Anand-Gelfand match will suffer a similar fate and be relegated to a location far from the limelight. Or perhaps we should count our blessings that Kazan received no coverage, considering the high percentage of draws. Gelfand's final win over Grischuk shot the percentage of decisive games up to an embarrassing

10%. Karpov and I were criticized for the many draws in our matches, but even our first marathon match looks like a firestorm compared to the quietude in Kazan. This is the vicious circle Ilyumzhinov's FIDE and the players have conspired to create. Events are held in obscurity and the players produce chess worthy of obscurity. Which comes first? It is worth remembering that Karpov's campaign vowed to split the matches into three events, allowing for longer matches and more rest time for the players and resulting in a more rigorous and marketable arrangement.

Under such drawish circumstances, chess becomes a distance race with a very slow pace. The favourites cease to show their mettle and the trophy goes to the runner with the strongest kick and the right wind at his back that day. Kirsan's adored mini-matches fulfilled his design of turning the world championship process into a dice game. The extreme tension of having so much at stake over such a small set of games ruins the nerves; the players are terrified of taking risks. It is no coincidence that the finalists were a young gambler and a serene veteran, both of whom played without the weight of great expectations. Most of the players in Kazan cooperated by rushing to the tiebreaks, Grischuk in particular coming one game away from reaching them for the third time without winning a game at slow controls. Even a clock in the Radjabov-Kramnik tiebreaks gave up in disgust!

After this catastrophe, FIDE sent out a questionnaire about how to run the world championship cycle, as if anything matters other than Ilyumzhinov's whims. Where was this supposed interest in the players' opinions before Ilyumzhinov unilaterally announced the event? The problem as always is that instead of developing an attractive system and then raising money for it, FIDE patches together an ad hoc scheme with whatever money they can scrape together. The contempt Ilyumzhinov and his gang have for chess and proper sponsorship was apparent when they discarded the London bid. Once again, professionals who required transparency and competence were unwilling to put up with the ravenous horde of FIDE officials who swept down from the Kalmykian steppe. Instead of providing leadership and planning, Ilyumzhinov presides over a souk of cash and political favours with no connection to the real world.

> Now FIDE, and Anand, have the last match they were looking for. The good news for the champion is that Gelfand is not his most dangerous opponent. The bad news is that sponsors are aware of that as well!

Ilyumzhinov would have us believe that there is no money available for big chess in the world beyond his buddies. A timely refutation came from St. Louis, Missouri, a city not known as a global chess centre – at least not since it hosted Games six through nine of the 1886 Steinitz-Zukertort match. The Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis and its enthusiastic patron, Rex Sinquefield, are busily turning the Midwestern city into a chess destination. At the same time as the Candidates', the club hosted a match longer than FIDE's between two elite players whose fighting spirit would have made them welcome substitutes in Kazan. The six-game duel between Ponomariov and Nakamura held more chess interest than those of their Candidate colleagues – and as many decisive games, three, as all of the Candidates' matches combined. Nakamura won the match 3½-2½ despite suffering in the King's Indian. It is a positive sign of the American's further potential that he won a match against a tough opponent despite his openings instead of because of them. His convincing positional victory in the final game should serve as notice that his Wijk aan Zee win was not an aberration.

Meanwhile, another subject of Botvinnik's prognostication, Vasily Ivanchuk, was in Havana adding yet another tournament victory to his remarkable collection. The average age of his opponents was around 25, but, as with Gelfand in Kazan, it was the veteran who had the most energy at the finish. The tireless Vasily won his final two games, including a last-round victory over twenty-year-old leader Le Quang Liem.

Ceaseless work, the hallmark of Botvinnik and the school he created, does not come easily to most. I have long defended the proposition that the capacity for hard work is itself a talent and not a choice anyone can simply make. Therefore it is pleasing to see Boris Gelfand rewarded for his lifetime of passionate labour. We can only hope that the honour of playing for the highest title is not his only reward. ■

Yasser Seirawan

CURRENT ELO: 2634

DATE OF BIRTH: March 24, 1960

PLACE OF BIRTH: Damascus

PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Amsterdam

What is your favourite colour?
Blue.

What food makes you happy?
Tasty ones. Especially Thai.

And what drink?
Cappuccino and herbal teas.

Who is your favourite author?
Frank Herbert (Dune series), Isaac Asimov (Foundation series) and Taylor Caldwell are all wonderful.

What was the best or most interesting book you ever read?
Guns, Germs and Steel by Jared Diamond. A marvellously thought-provoking work.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
Witness for the Prosecution with Marlene Dietrich, Tyrone Power and Charles Laughton.

Do you have a favourite actor?
Clint Eastwood.

And a favourite actress?
Susan Sarandon.

What music do you like to listen to?
Mostly pop. My current favourite is Adele. Her *Rolling in the Deep* is simply great.

Do you have a favourite painter or artist?
Not especially, although I've always admired Dali. For some reason his art has, at times, stopped me dead in my tracks.

What was your best result ever?
Winning the 1986 U.S. Championship undefeated was memorable, while winning Wijk aan Zee (1980) and making my final GM norm still stands out.

Who is your favourite chess player of all time?
Mikhail Tal for his dazzling play and marvellous humanity. I also admired Bent Larsen enormously.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
Alekhine's two-volume *My Best Games* were fantastic.

What was the most exciting chess game you ever saw?
The 1982 Olympiad encounter between Kortchnoi and Kasparov. Still one of the most exciting games to replay, watching it unfold was spellbinding.

What are chess players particularly good at?
In general, chess players make excellent 'gamers.' Teach them a game and they are instantly competitive.

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?
Social skills. Oftentimes, chess players can 'fade away' getting locked into analysis of their latest game. The only exception I know is myself. Ahem.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
Thomas Edison. In general, I think inventors are extraordinary persons.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
Bruce Lee, Marvin Gaye and Frank Herbert.

Is there something you'd love to learn?
Languages.

What is your greatest fear?
Fear of heights. While I love 'views', looking down from extreme heights, however, I've realized isn't a good idea for my tummy.

What would you save from your house if it were on fire?
Photo albums and of course my laptop.

If you could change one thing in the chess world, what would it be?
Only one thing you ask? Alright, I would say the World Championship cycle. It is a mess. Magnus Carlsen is right that the current FIDE cycle doesn't fit with our modern age.

What is the stupidest rule in chess?
Losing on time. The idea of the chess clock was to make the players move more quickly, not to decide the outcome of the game.

What will be the nationality of the 2050 chess World Champion?
Indian. How old is Vishy again?

Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
Not necessarily a knowledge of chess but the discipline of the thinking that chess forces is quite useful.

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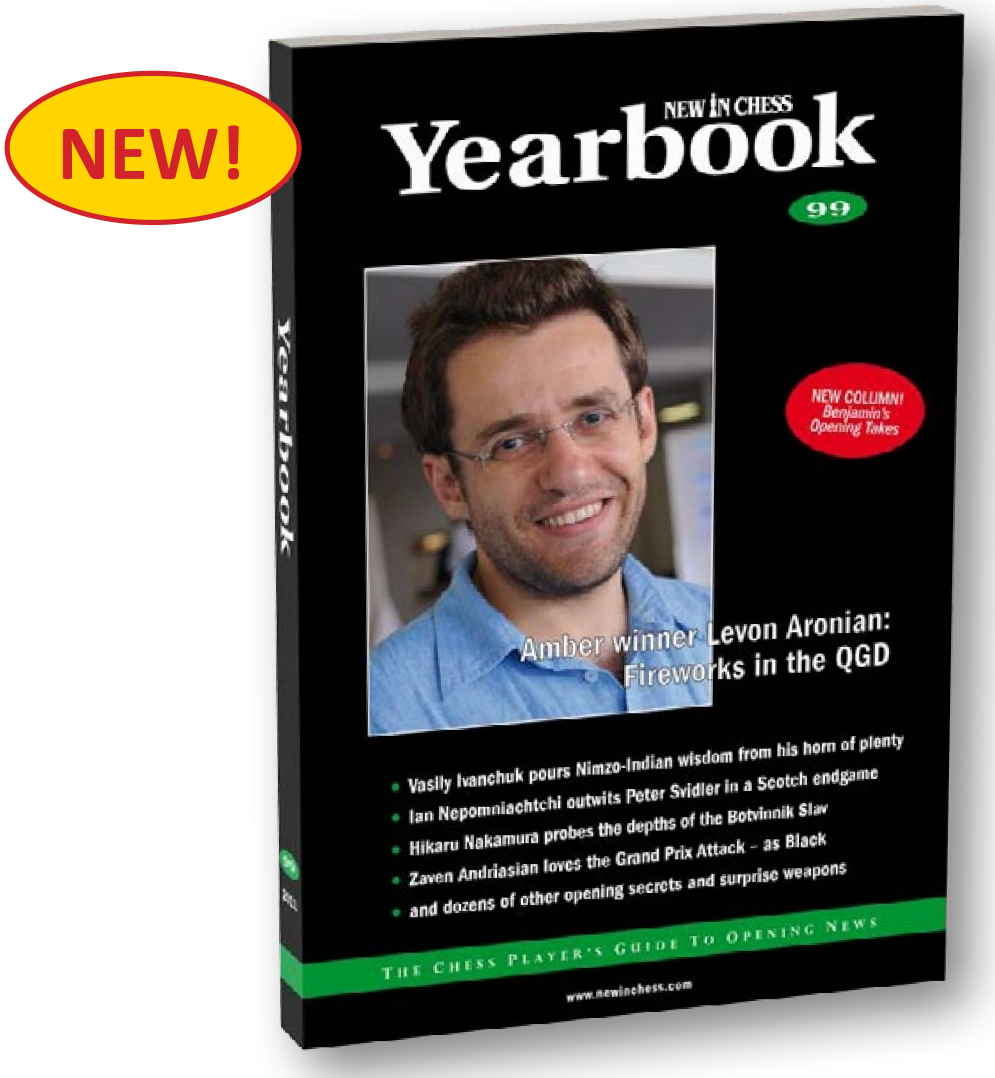
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